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TIMBUCTOO

THE MYSTERIOUS

TIMBUCTOO

THE MYSTERIOUS

BY

FELIX DUBOIS

Translated from the French by

DIANA WHITE

With One hundred and fifty-three Illustrations from Photographs and Drawings made on the spot and Eleven Maps and Plans

NEW YORK

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CHAPTER I

FROM PARIS TO THE NIGER

The journey from Paris to the Niger is scarcely so simple as that from Nice to Algeria.

Having fallen asleep in a railway carriage on your departure from Paris, you awake six weeks later on a canoe-barge upon the Niger.

The steamer lands you at the entrance to the Senegal, in a country which has belonged to France for centuries, and yet is only known to the general public by its thermometrical mention, inscribed between '*bains ordinaires*' and '*culture des vers à soie*' at 40° centigrade as 'the temperature of Senegal.' These rudimentary notions are not even accurate. Will you believe that for months there you wear your greatcoat morning and evening, the mean temperature registered at the local observatory being 24°, not 40°?

From Dakar (the port of Senegal, and the finest harbour on the west coast of Africa) you go by train to St. Louis, the capital of the colony. Greeting to those one hundred and seventy odd miles of iron road! They are the first laid by Europeans in Negraic Africa, and date from 1882. Civilisation has stamped other of its signs upon these virgin soils. In St. Louis and at Rufisk (an important commercial town in Dakar Bay) you find the streets lighted by electricity; and universal suffrage is

vigorously handled under the form of legislative elections, municipalities, and general elections. Betting and horse-racing are treated with equal vigour.

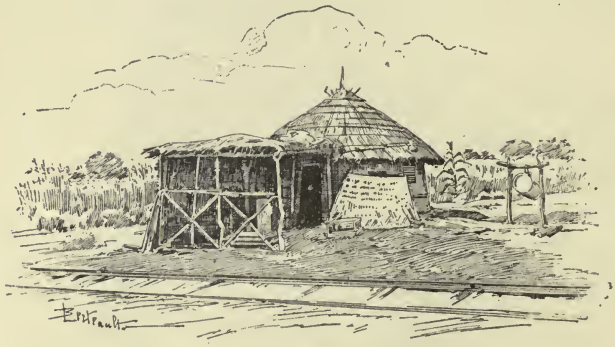
A small service of steamers starts regularly twice a week from the quays of St. Louis for the Sudan. The management on board is comfortable and dear; and you play poker in the saloon just as on any big self-respecting steamer. For eight days you watch the banks of the Senegal monotonously unfold; then comes the morning when you moor on a broken bank at the foot of a huge tree. This is Kayes, the port and actual capital of the Sudan.

A pestilential corner, and the solution of the following difficult problem: How to be at the same time a town in the middle of a swamp and a swamp in the middle of a town. This anomalous method of building a town makes you think for a moment that you have arrived at the end of the world, but you recover your self-possession on seeing the telegraph wires crossing the street and on hearing the whistle of the locomotives. A railway in fact continues the path from the Senegal to the Niger, and will one day carry the traveller right up to Bammaku so easily that we shall be able to reckon it a fortnight from Paris to the Niger.

At present the railway only extends 108 of the 341 miles that separate Kayes from Bammaku. For the first 78 miles its track (reduced to a three-foot way as are certain local lines in France) is normal and open to commercial traffic. Its administration and maintenance are in the hands of military engineers, and the trains arrive at both ends with remarkable punctuality. Its only mistake is in stopping at Bafoulaba, where the Bafing and the Bakoy unite to form the Senegal. After that you have to content yourself, for the present, with a décauville for the 130 miles to Dioubaba.

A TRAIN IN THE SUDAN: NATIVE PASSENGERS

I found my caravan, which had gone on in front, awaiting me at Dioubaba. I picked up luggage, porters, and horse there, and a curious adventure in addition. I had stumbled upon a white horse in the early part of my journey. I say stumbled, for I should assuredly never have bought such a thing; the colonial administration had kindly placed it at my disposal. A white horse! What a predicament! Bad luck, as every one knows, bad luck for the rest of the journey! How could I avert



A RAILWAY STATION

such an evil omen? Providence obligingly came to my rescue by one of those secret ways which are His.

I luckily noticed at Kayes that my saddle-cloth was missing, and I tried all the shops (not a long business) without being able to find another. In these countries the only thing you can find that you want or can rely upon is—yourself. I had to fall back upon one of those blankets they sell to the negro, and chose one that was cheap and red, but soft to the horse's back. He, the horse, had come by luggage-van as far as Bafoulaba, but as the décauville was unable to carry him further in that manner, I sent him on by road to Dioubaba, whilst I made use of the little railway. It is just as well to avoid twenty-eight miles of road on

horseback when you have some hundreds in prospect. It was night when the miniature train entered the leafy vault at Dioubaba, that serves as station and waiting-room. My people were all asleep, and my horse peacefully grazing. Nothing abnormal there, apparently. But at starting next morning, as I was about to bestride my mount for the first time, what did I see?—A scarlet horse! Imagine my joy! It was evidently the finger of God that had thus transformed my steed,—aided by heat, perspiration, and the negro blanket. Behold me now, full of confidence for the rest of my journey.

The adventure did not end here, for in spite of repeated groomings and washings it proved impossible to restore my charger to his original colour. The dye, detestable for blankets, is admirable for horses. My animal was the wonder of the natives of all the villages we passed through. 'Ah! these white men, they said, 'they can even make scarlet horses!'

Enough of the horse! Let us now review my equipment. First among them is my *valet-de-chambre*, butler, etc., etc., for numerous functions accumulate in the Sudan under the modest title of '*garçon*.' He is a black, thick-lipped fellow, with a European straw hat, a white vest with shiny leather buttons, short breeches with narrow blue and white stripes, naked legs, and feet ditto. One of the survivors of the Bonnier affair, in which he figured under the title of 'Captain Nigotte's servant.' His master was the solitary officer who escaped from the Touaregs, only to die shortly after my arrival. Splendid testimonials. The doctor says he is 'an excellent sick-nurse.' I immediately engage him upon that, with the idea that if I leave my bones in the desert it will at least be with the conviction that they have been well cared for. To sum him up: he is a well-balanced person, no chatterbox, but dignified, as becomes a person of note.

There is nothing tragic nor historical about my cook. He is my joy, except in those deadly moments when I rage with despair. I engaged him rather hurriedly. 'Can you cook?' 'Oh yes!' he replied, with the assurance of every good nigger when questioned concerning his capabilities. If I had said, 'Can you paint like Raphael and Murillo?' he would have answered 'Oh yes,' with equal conviction. In reality he can whistle a few bars of the Marseillaise tolerably well, and can boil water and eggs—hard. I do all the rest.

The third and last person of my establishment is the groom. A silent, bearded fellow, with Semitic profile. He leads the horse up to me when we start, holds the stirrup, and disappears for the rest of the journey, reappearing at the end of it to hold the stirrup, and vanish again—with the animal. Never a word says he to me, and never a word say I to him. I do not even know his name: he is a riddle, an enigma. It would not surprise me to learn that he is the nigger from Porte St. Denis, though I have not yet heard the clock ticking in his stomach.

Around this trinity circle twenty-two natives, uniform as to rarity of drapery, but very varied as to coiffure. Some have hair like astrachan or door-mats; the heads of others are shaved as bare as a lawyer's chin; some have a tuft in the middle, others again rejoice in a circular fringe like the beard of some old sea-dog. Scarcely less variegated are the colours of their skins: treacle black, charcoal black, dull prune, shiny prune, coffee colour, Seine colour—a whole scale is well represented.

Place half a hundredweight of baskets and cases upon each head, and you have a very complete sketch of the equipment necessary for travel in the Sudan.

Having made use of various means of locomotion, since leaving Paris, for accomplishing his journey with comfort and rapidity,

the traveller now finds himself face to face with the most primitive of all—the road, I may add, the African road. That is to say, something vague, that has nothing in common with its European prototype but the name; something to which levelling, ballasting, a firm soil, and even bridges are unknown. And it is only now that the soul of the African traveller thrills and tastes of joy. Another life is beginning for him, the true life, the only life—the life of the bush.

What makes this life so intoxicating to all who experience it, from the officer straight from the military academy down to the private or marine-artilleryman fresh from a village school; from the aristocrat of royal descent to the professor of rhetoric? It captivates all alike; the ministerial quill-driver become colonial official, the engineer, the artist, and the man of commerce who superintends a factory.

Its charm cannot easily be explained to the sedentary; it escapes analysis, being as subtle as it is penetrating.

Let me see. The food is indifferent, the water is indifferent, the sleeping is indifferent, and your health is often in a precarious state. Heat and fatigue are the only things superior in quality, and yet your heart is filled to overflowing with contentment. As it can hardly be their inconveniences that make the hours spent in the bush so delightful, it must be the sensations that are grafted on them, and the wonderful pictures accompanying them. It is the mingling of the human with the free life of forests and plains that have existed for thousands and thousands of years; and the fact that you are contemplating that life with centuries of civilisation beating in your veins. It is something, too, in the manner in which these people express their thoughts. You are accosted by giants who could crush you between their finger and thumb, and who address you humbly, 'Greet one of God's poor.'

In another village an old skeleton of a chief totally ignores your arrival, your presence, even your visit. You stand near enough to touch his foot, and he continues impassively squatting and reading his Koran, until you half expect to hear the whistling of a lance through the air, to see the flash of a sabre, or hear the cocking of an old musket. Then, again, some old negress stops your horse, mumbling words that are unintelligible. She smiles at you, and offers you a handful of sweet roots. To give her pleasure, and because her wrinkled smile recalls the fact that such poor old things took pity on Réné Caillié and Mungo Park (your predecessors in this corner of Africa), and saved them from dying of hunger, you accept her present of cold cooked roots. Her joy is great, and by some small donation you double it. To put the finishing touch to her pleasing contentment, you bite one of her offerings and continue your way, absently munching the sweet batatas, whose flavour so strangely recalls the *marron glacé*. Memory is sent galloping in pursuit of visions of your native land, and you recall the fact that it is snowing and hailing hard there, while you have been gently cooking since daybreak.

And then life in the bush means flocks of guinea-fowls running about in the thickets, and coveys of young partridges that rise, careless of sportsmen, from under your horse's very hoofs. It means strange, intoxicating scents that suddenly envelop you, and leave you as suddenly as they came; and a delirium of sunsets passionately colouring a sky that was monotonously colourless the moment before. And nights! One night we encamped in the huts surrounding a village square, and my men lighted huge fires in the open air. The gleams from their flames carved a vault of red and gold upon the darkness, and under this arch a fantastic ballet took place. The wings of bats, illuminated from below, made streaks of light upon the night, like the trails of

falling stars, and were distantly encircled with satellites of fire-flies.

But I can only give a tenth part, and that feebly, of the unexpected sights and sensations I enjoyed. You cannot taste life's choicest morsels reclining in an arm-chair.

Dioubaba, the terminus of the décauville, is situated in the heart of lovely mountain and river scenery. Its landscape would realise a handsome income in Europe. The river Bakoy, hitherto closely confined, here breaks into a rocky waterfall, some hundreds of yards in length, full of rapids and foaming currents. The horizon is bordered by mountain-tops, and the river-banks are covered by gigantic trees festooned with garlands of long creepers. A sergeant of the engineers acts as station-master, and a sapper attends to the telegraph. They are perfectly happy, they say; and are married, according to the custom of the country, of course, to two gay little natives with charming ways. This society is completed by Bibi, a young hippopotamus, lately captured, and very tame. With a discretion, unlooked for in such an animal, he spends the day in the Bakoy, so as not to interfere with his friends' occupations. They go to the bank when in want of amusement and call 'Bibi! Bibi!' Bibi's pink muzzle soon appears; he looks round for them with his little black eyes, and, dripping and wriggling, he runs up to be caressed.

The road from Dioubaba to Bammaku cuts from east to west across the massive Foota Jallon range that separates the basin of the Senegal from that of the Niger. It is full of pictures recalling the Forest of Fontainebleau, and is so abundantly watered that you fall asleep every night to the sound of some gurgling cascade or waterfall. I know nothing more suggestive

than this road, the main artery of the Sudan. You see the colonial life coming and going upon it from day to day; and it also reflects the retrospective image of the life that rolled along the great European highways before the days of coaches. Without the highwaymen, however, for we have made enormous progress since the pacification of the Sudan ten years ago. Then, travellers encamped upon it with sentinels posted at night as if they were in the country of an enemy. To-day it is as safe as the Champs Elysées.

Not that vehicles are numerous, but people are, and animals. They are principally parties of porters that you meet; some travelling to their destination laden with cases, and bundles, and sacks of millet; others returning, freed from their burdens,

ON THE ROAD: DIOULAS HALTING

dancing and capering along the road to the sound of flute or drum, joyous as children let loose from school. There are *dioulas*, too, or native commercial travellers, with their servants or slaves

and their wives and children, all driving donkeys laden with salt and pearls, etc.

A meeting between Europeans is particularly pleasant. You

ON THE ROAD: EUROPEANS TRAVELLING

exchange bows and a declension of names, and titles when you have them; and a long talk ensues between two people who have never seen each other in their lives before. News of the interior is exchanged for news of Europe or the coast. You hear what is passing in the countries to which you are going and in the countries to which you are not going. You exchange a thousand little services, and, above all, the time! For watches in these climates develop the most fantastic manners, and the only thing you can be sure of is that they will never tell you the time even approximately. After this you turn your backs upon one another with all the grace in the world, and each resumes his journey.

The Europeans you meet are mostly government officials,

officers, and privates. Some are returning to France for a holiday, having fulfilled their year or eighteen months of service, while others are newly arrived to take their vacant places. Sometimes

A COMMISSARIAT TRANSPORT

you pass a hand-ambulance from which the head of some unlucky invalid emerges, and, if you are good-natured and furnished with plenty of provisions, it is very easy to play the good Samaritan on these occasions.

Unfortunately the man of commerce only furnishes the smallest share of these encounters: and why? The answer is to be found in the road itself and the troops of porters you are incessantly meeting upon it, for the head of man is too limited a means of transport to permit a very extensive traffic. Why not use vehicles then? The account given above of the *pseudo* roads of the Sudan will answer this question, for they exist only in name. The commissariat department knows something of all this, for the forts we have set up in our vast Nigerian possessions must be victualled. Europeans, surrounded by black troops, live in them,

keeping the country in order, civilising it, organising it, and preparing it for occupation. It is of course necessary to supply these garrisons with European provisions, such as cases of wine, great iron boxes of flour, coffee, sugar, barrels of salt meat, and arms, ammunition, clothes, tools, etc. To carry these stores to the river (the only easy means of transport) the commissariat possesses carts which are set upon this pretence of a road; at what cost of time, trouble, and money it would take volumes to tell. One meets these transports from time to time, struggling with the chasms and other asperities of the so-called roads. They are commanded by artillery officers, and are always accompanied by a veterinary; but I prefer to leave to your imagination the condition to which the unhappy mules are reduced, even though they only do ten or twelve miles a day. It is a terrible thing this victualling, its

THE COMMISSARIAT: IN FORT BAMMAKU

shadow pursues you all along the road. Encampments are provided every ten or twelve miles with straw huts for the men and picket-lines for the animals. You can follow the progress of the

transports by the litter of rags, bits of paper and abandoned carts they leave behind them. Two forts mark the road from Badoumba to Kita. Neither is garrisoned, and both have fallen a prey to the commissariat department. Their various outworks and approaches are strewn with a litter of cases on which one reads medicines, sugar, candles, oil, etc., and the names of the places to which these stores are destined—Farannah, Siguiri, Segu, or Timbuctoo. The forts themselves are filled from end to end with squatting porters awaiting their share of burdens; and you hear, in the snatches of conversation and the orders that are flying about, of nothing but 'cases' and 'transport.' The impatience with which Europeans and natives alike are awaiting the continuation of the rail from Dioubaba to Bammaku becomes suddenly comprehensible.

At last beyond Kundu (a third fort, completely abandoned) you reach the line of cleavage between the Senegal and Niger. So far the country has been pleasantly varied, recalling somewhat of Switzerland without giving an equal impression of fertility; but in the next and last twenty-five miles of the road springs and rivulets multiply at every step. Agriculture, interspersed with charming glimpses of silvery water, spreads over uninterrupted fields for the rest of the way. The villages cluster closer together, and are more densely populated. In a delightful valley of the great Kati mountains a stream tumbles along between two rocky ledges, which start suddenly aside and spread into a fan, to disappear upon the distant banks of the Niger.

It was not without a certain amount of emotion that I approached the great river, and for this reason. It was four years now since I first started for the Niger and failed to reach

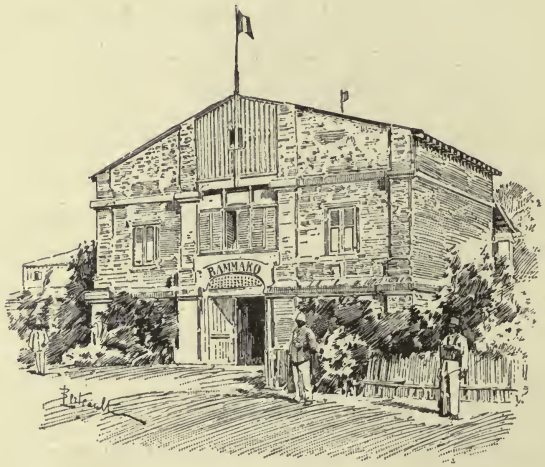
it! My then companion, Captain Faidherbe, was making his third attempt to reach that serpent of Western Africa. In his first he followed the Flatters Mission along the Southern Nigerian route. In the second, starting from the frontier of Portuguese Guinea, he was stopped by wars among the natives. For the third time he started from Benty and the Mellacorée, in the company of the painter Adrien Marie and myself, only to be cut short by Samory's troops at a distance of twenty-five miles from its banks; and two years ago he died without having seen the Niger.

The memory of his ill-fortune possessed me, and grew more intense with every stage of the journey. I had an idea that some of his ill-luck must pursue me. Assuredly I too shall not see this Niger, I thought. And now at last, after doubling the stages for the last five days (so great was my anxiety to reach it), my horse begins to stumble down the steep and rocky declivity that leads to the river. I dismount, and a fresh anxiety seizes me. Suppose it is only another great disillusion to which I am advancing?

The narrow path widens suddenly; its rocky sides are flung right and left like the leaves of a door. 'There is the Djoliba,' says my historical servant, as calmly as if he were announcing 'Dinner is served.' It is an impressive spectacle from the height of the road that still clings to the hill. A vast horizon lies at my feet bathed in the splendours of a tropical sunset, and down there, in a plain of gold and green and red, shines a silver trail bordered by a line of darkness. There it is, a mere vapour, the dream of a river in a valley of dreams, and the dark line is the hills by which it flows, almost invisibly. 'God is great' as they say here. There is no disillusion, as is so often the case in the realisation of the unknown. I can scarcely take my

eyes from the serenely majestic panorama that is spread before me.

And now come what may! I remount my horse and urge him to a gallop along the road, bordered by trees, that stretches across the plain. A postern stops me, bearing a placard on which is written in white letters on black, like the name of a railway station: Bammaku.



THE NIGER AT KOULIKORO

CHAPTER II

THE NIGER

The Niger, with its vast and misty horizons, is more like an inland ocean than a river. Borne along upon it, scarcely seeing land, the traveller is carried away by those endless dreams which haunt the infinitudes of the sea. Its waters break upon its banks in the monotonously cadenced waves of the Mediterranean shores; and when winds, grown to violence in the desert, swell its waves into a great race, sea-sickness will convince the most rebellious that the river Niger is of kin to oceans.

Its shores, no less than its waves, resemble those of the ocean. Only occasionally rising into cliffs, as at Koulikoro, they more frequently call to mind our own Atlantic strands, being formed, not of the white impalpable dust of the desert, but of the true reddened shingle of the beach.

Like the oceans, the Niger possesses its sailors, not merely occasional seamen, but whole populations, privileged to serve it exclusively, living for it and by it alone. They are the Somnos or Bosos, and are not the aboriginals of the Nigerian countries, but were among the first of those great migrations of people who saw Western Africa across the centuries. The history of

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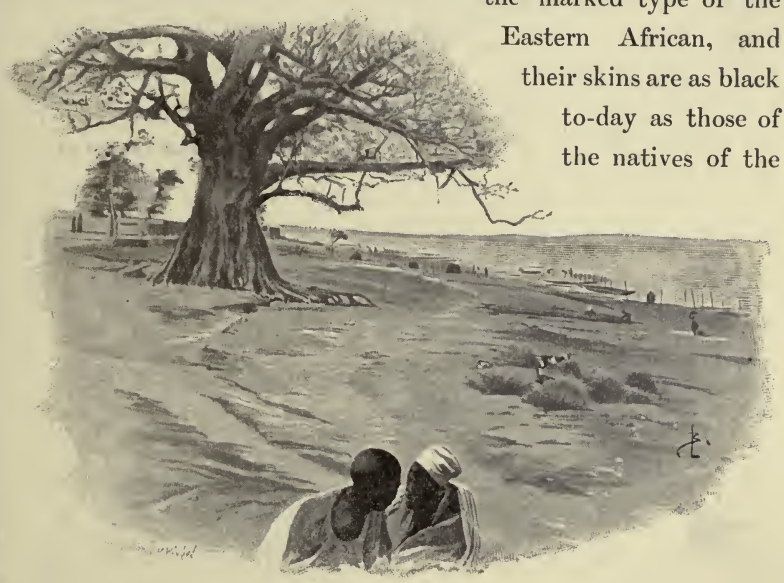
their origin is shrouded in a legend which the ancient among them are very willing to impart.

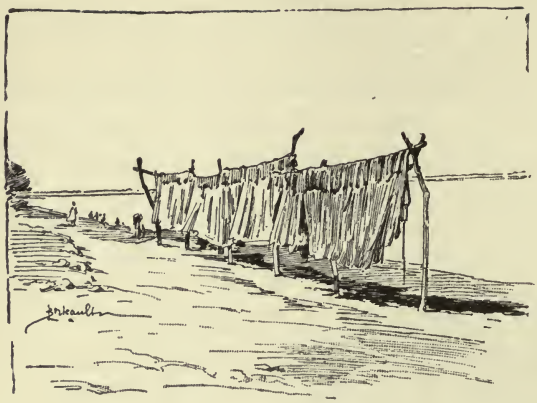
'Our ancestors,' they say, 'came from the great mountains of the East.' Do they mean the mountains of Ethiopia? Could they have come from the hills surrounding the Upper Nile? They have no idea. Nothing in their features recalls the marked type of the Eastern African, and their skins are as black to-day as those of the natives of the



A FISHING-VILLAGE ON THE BANKS OF THE NIGER

Sudan. The one thing their legend preserves for certain is, that even in those early times they were a purely aquatic people. They fished and navigated for the king of their country, being bond-servants, apparently, to the crown. The Sudanese to this day do not reckon them among the free tribes.

Thus they boated and fished upon their rivers, until one day the king wished them to build him houses and bridges. This was a task alien to their caste, the work of slaves according to



their ideas, and therefore repugnant to them. In revenge they offered their king a present of poisoned tortoise, of which he ate and died; whereupon they took flight in their vessels, carrying all the boats with them, to ensure against pursuit. They followed the course of river after river in their flight until they arrived at the Niger, which, according to them, flowed to the north.

And there they live to this day, lining its streams and tributaries with villages that recall the fishing-hamlets of our own coasts. They form the sole population of these settlements and occupy distinct quarters in the towns and cities, thus emphasising the fact that the Bosos still belong exclusively to the river. All this gave me a reflex affection for them which increased with knowledge, gained by many days spent in the midst of their lives. I have seen them set out to the capture of their great prey (the alligator and sea-cow), looking, the black Bosos in his black canoe, like a bronze group against the blinding light. In the bow of the long, narrow, unsteady pirogue one of their number stands upright in a fine attitude of attack, whilst the other, crouching in the stern, noiselessly obeys the directions of his companion. Silently, almost without movement, they advance until the watchful eye in the bow discerns some alligator asleep on the tide, or some great bearded fish dozing

betwixt wind and water. Then the nude silhouette in the bow is strained by a beautiful movement of the free body, the right arm is poised, and the harpoon flung, striking the great beast unawares.

The Bosos is not only the fisherman, he is also the boatman of the Niger, and I have seen him exert admirable physical qualities in this latter capacity, yielding nothing in sobriety and endurance to the ocean-going sailor. The six or eight men forming the crew of my boat worked day and night, alternately sitting to wield the paddle when the water was deep, and standing, when the bottom could be felt, to ply the long bamboo poles. This variation was the only relaxation they allowed themselves besides a few moments for their meals. And what meals they were! If I had permitted it, a few handfuls of millet seed, neither cooked nor ground, but merely moistened with water, would have amply satisfied them. Sometimes when the moon was late in rising, or slumber proved too inviting, one of their number would chant some monotonous and melancholy refrain to which the singer improvised brief couplets which were taken up in chorus by his comrades. Now and again they would rouse themselves to greater exertions by their cry of 'Tara (quickly), tara, Bosos!' The six or seven days of our journeying were only broken by some four or five hours of indifferent repose, uncomfortably snatched at the bottom of the boat, and disturbed by the continued paddling of their companions. Could any men of our race furnish a like example of endurance? The chatter and laughter were a little less perhaps in the last few days, and they had recourse rather more frequently to powdered tobacco (their only stimulant), which some thrust up their nostrils and others into their mouths. These were the only signs of unusual fatigue which they permitted to

appear. Nor were their exertions undertaken from any motives of devotion, but for a man whom they had never seen until a few moments before starting, and whom they knew they would leave soon after reaching their destination. Moreover, my very eagerness to press forward was unintelligible to them. Time has neither value nor meaning for them; they do not even know their own ages, and their life is merely a road, sometimes long, sometimes short, but in any case leading nowhere.

For the first few days I had to discipline and threaten a little, and, when warnings failed, to distribute a few blows. A strict impartiality always determined these awards, and since a rigid sense of justice is preserved in all primitive natures, they bore me no ill-will for the chastisement. With the mark of the blow still showing grey on their black shoulders, they would seize the first and least pretext to shout with laughter, while the boat slipped along with increased rapidity to the cry of 'Tara, tara, Bosos!'

One more tribute I will pay them. Alone among them, distant many days' journey from the white man, and travelling through an imperfectly conquered, sometimes openly hostile country, never once did I feel that my safety was in any way threatened. Was it entirely owing to the superiority of the white man, a conviction of which becomes firmly impressed upon one (in spite of natural modesty and philosophy) as one traces one's path through these virgin countries? Did not this sense of security proceed as much from a contemplation of the attractive manners daily displayed before my eyes, the litany of greetings exchanged with the unknown occupants of the canoes we met or overtook, and the good-nature and disinterestedness evinced by all? Fishing Bosos would spontaneously offer my

men a share of their catch, a fine fish, or a portion of alligator. Hardly slackening the pace to receive the gift, thanks would still be flying when we had left the giver far behind. 'Tara, tara, Bosos!'

Is it surprising that the hours spent upon the vast dominions of the Niger should seem pleasant to me? Is it not probable that they will represent the happiest hours of my life as I watch my staff of travel burning on my hearth? They will remain as the souvenirs of a cruise into infinite space and liberty, as a brief escape from the thousand fetters mankind has placed upon man under the pretence of progress. Their memory is a vision of a primeval existence ignorant of good and evil, living, without effort and without laws, an upright and good life. It was, in short, a flight from all the falseness and corruption that civilisation has put into the heart of man, the realisation of the dream which, though played with by many philosophies, has been accomplished by none.

Ah, that delightful, that matchless cruise, which you, fortunate possessors of fast, sumptuous, and elegant yachts, can never enjoy!

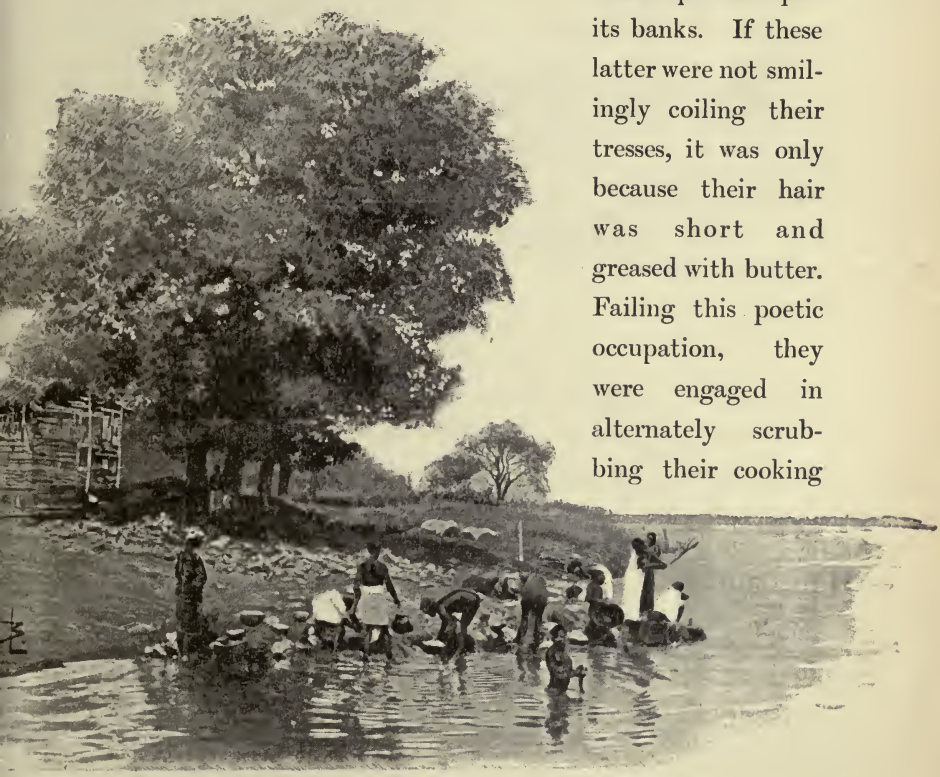
My yacht would have ill-supported any one of those adjectives, for it was a whimsical mixture of European barge and aboriginal canoe. It had borrowed from the former its breadth of beam and its flat bottom, and from the latter its sharply pointed extremities and its deplorable facility for springing a leak. A thatched hollow served me amidships as bedroom, dining-room, study, and dressing-room. I enjoyed, moreover, an amphibious existence, for the water unceasingly trickled through the flooring into my apartment. A small folding bedstead was my only piece of furniture. Table, cupboards, desk, washstand, and sideboard were represented by different packages, wicker baskets, bottle-

cases, and portmanteaux. A long box filled with earth served as kitchen and stove, and was placed fore and aft in accordance with the direction of the wind. In the remaining very limited spaces the seven or eight men who handled the boat were distributed, together with two bleating sheep (representing our meat-supply) and some clucking hens. The game brought down by lucky shots, and the fish and other properties of my men, were extra; and, in addition to all this, some place had to be found for the kitchen fuel. For the benefit of those who like figures and complicated problems, I will add that my Noah's ark measured twenty-six feet three by seven feet six in the widest part.

Obviously it would have embarrassed me to give one of those Trouville or Cannes *fêtes* to which my fellow-yachtsmen are accustomed, but luckily the occasion never arose. Yet *fêtes* there were, provided day and night by the Niger with a variety and

MY YACHT

splendour that the richest merchant in sugar-plums could not have equalled. Its waters were now blue as the Mediterranean, now grey as the North Sea, and now again they were apparelled in the green of the great ocean; while Venus Anadiomenes in black sported upon its banks. If these latter were not smilingly coiling their tresses, it was only because their hair was short and greased with butter. Failing this poetic occupation, they were engaged in alternately scrubbing their cooking



ON THE BANKS OF THE NIGER: THE VENUS ANADIOMENES

utensils and washing their children in the splashing wave. Art, however, lost nothing by that, for, in their constantly changing attitudes, their perfect nudity only served to call attention to their marvellously sculptured torsos and their bronze skins, touched into gold by the brightness of the sunshine.

Here and there upon the great strands were playing the strange childish forms, with the great heads and stomachs balanced on the slender limbs, of the negro babies. Drolly would they interrupt their games and run close to the river-bank to watch the white

THE MILITARY SALUTE

man pass, making him the while—a military salute! Nothing more comical could be imagined than these little naked caricatures with one arm stiffly raised at an angle. If I smiled, they gave me back the same broad laugh the Venus Anadiomenes had tossed me with their 'Anissagai' (Good day)—the same that my Bosos laughed a minute after they had been struck. This gentle laughter, with neither intellect nor malice in it, is always ready to their lips, even in the most serious circumstances, and is as necessary to their existence apparently as food or water. It is the happy mirth of a childish people, ignorant of the physical and moral torments from which the more perfect man results.

The placid fisher with the line also greets us in military fashion. This form of salutation seems to be the only thing that our civilisation has brought them so far. Poor souls! when the rest has followed they will have ceased to laugh.

Between Segu and the regions bordering Timbuctoo I passed

wonderful herds of oxen, horses, goats, and sheep. Unlike the stunted cattle and emaciated hacks of the countries of the Niger's source, these oxen had imposing humps, and the horses were on the lines of Arabs. The sheep, too, were astonishing. Long fleece replaced the close wool of the southern animal, and their flocks were to be counted by such thousands of heads that I was greeted at long distances by ovations of bleating.

Travelling one day between Lake Debo and Sarafara, it was given me to see quite another sort of herd. We were touching upon a large plain bordered by a distant wood, when suddenly, at sunset, four black lions appeared walking in Indian file. They advanced with slow and solemn steps, pausing with heads erect as the sound of our paddles reached them. After fixing upon us a look that was half-displeased, half-disdainful, they turned their backs upon us, and, still keeping the same order, disappeared with unmoved slowness and solemnity in the wooded

PASTURE ON THE SHORES OF THE NIGER

green of the distance. The scene was so captivating that the thought of my Winchester never entered my head. The gun was always at hand, however, to spread a little perturbation (impossible to effect more appreciable results) among the families

of hippopotami who, towards evening, thrust their pink muzzles out of the water, and to annoy the numerous alligators who relaxed in sunny slumbers throughout the day.

The feathered species did not get off so cheaply, however, especially the wild ducks, whom, at my leisure, I would invite to my table in the shape of roast or stew. The white ospreys, the Niger's favourite bird, were truly innumerable. They dappled the banks, looking like flakes of precious snow, with silky reflections made lustrous by the sun. The gracious outlines of their slender forms, the supple necks and long slim legs, stood out in such dainty visions from the green grass and grey banks that one shot them remorsefully. Alas! their death-warrant is written and attached to the base of their slender necks; for it is there, and not on their heads, that the fragile plumes grow—delicate emblems of themselves and of those alone who should be privileged to wear them. From these plumes, in fact, are made those precious *parures* which, mounted in jewelled clasps, place such a charming point of pride upon the forehead of brunette and blonde alike. The allurement of such a spoil, seen in imagination adorning some cherished head, dispels all remorse, and hastens the fall of the trigger.

The confidence of these charming birds is very great, for the native, disdainful of its flesh and ignorant of the value of its plumes, has never hunted it. They alight boldly in the midst of the flocks of sheep that have such an inexplicable attraction for them, and it is very quaint to see groups of two or three ospreys surround each sheep, and with gravely measured steps follow its browsing until the innocent ruminant looks like some captive surrounded by its gaolers.

Other birds of valuable feather dart about the sands, such as the marabou, metallic blackbirds, kingfishers in every shade of

wonderful azure, and flocks of guinea-fowls, flamingoes, and pelicans. Sometimes, on approaching the sedgy banks, a strange rustling is followed by a cloud of dust. It is caused by those tiny creatures, scarcely bigger than crickets, the millet-eaters. I must not forget to mention the trumpet-bird among my intimate friends—a large black wader, whose note might easily be mistaken for the horn of our tramways.

As infinitely varied as the colours of the kingfisher are the scenes in which this medley of life unfolds. At Toulimandio

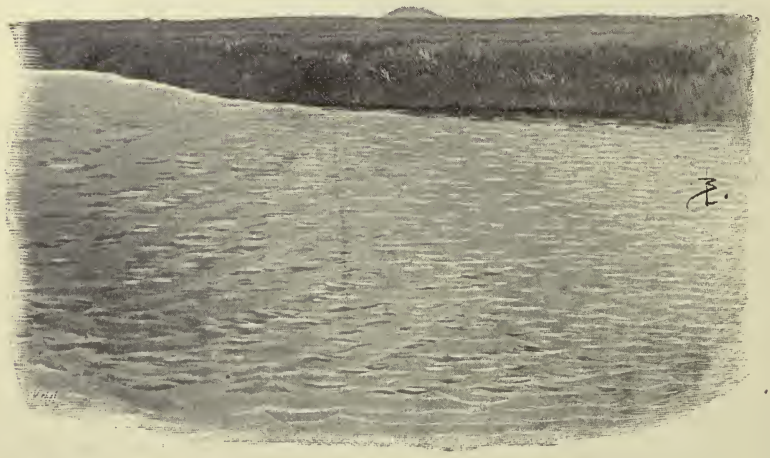
THE SHORES OF LAKE DEBO AT GOURAO: GUNBOAT STATION

the shores are formed of high woods of wonderful verdure, dark and deep as velvet, and the mountains seen in the distance are the last ramifications of the Foota Jallon range. Were it not for the unaccustomed proportions of the river and the marvellous sun, there would be nothing specially tropical about this country.

Little by little the woods thin and the trees diminish in height. The river-bed is strewn with trunks torn from the banks by the floods, and many more hang disconsolately over the water, certain victims to the approaching inundations.

At Nyamina, Segu, and Sansanding, the woods give place to great plains of tillage and cattle-rearing, that spread further than the eye can reach, and close upon them follows, with Lake Debo, a maritime scene. This lake is a huge basin of water by the side of the river, and, the two hillocks guarding its entrance being passed, a veritable sea spreads before you. Water everywhere, always, and for ever. Its shores are invisible, for no distant mountains betray their boundaries, as is the case with the Swiss lakes.

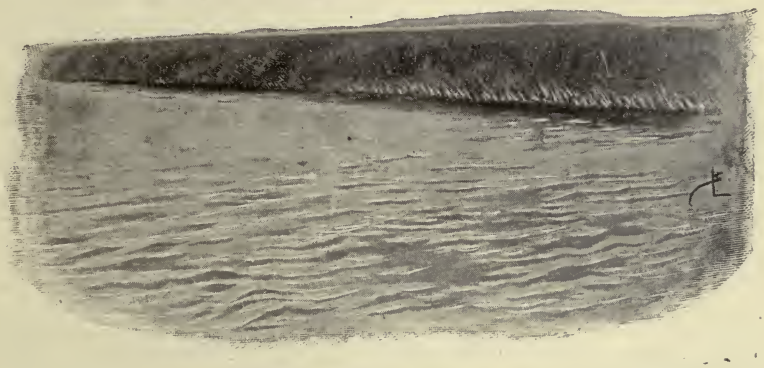
An equally unexpected vision awaits the traveller beyond Lake Debo; and it is now a landscape from Normandy or England that is disclosed to eyes stupefied by such an apparition in the heart of tropical Africa. Great meadows of a moist, intense green are bordered by park-like woods. So vivid is the impression that you are disappointed not to see the turrets and battlements of a Lancashire manor, or the slated roofs of some Château of the Eure, rising from their midst. The superb



MOUNT ST. CHARLES, AT THE ENTRANCE TO LAKE DEBO

troops of humped cattle, large and sleek, scarcely dispel this northern illusion.

All this changes after Sarafara, and it is now the tangle of a tropical forest that defiles before my yacht, now some Eastern scene that I have already witnessed in Egypt or Syria. Palm-



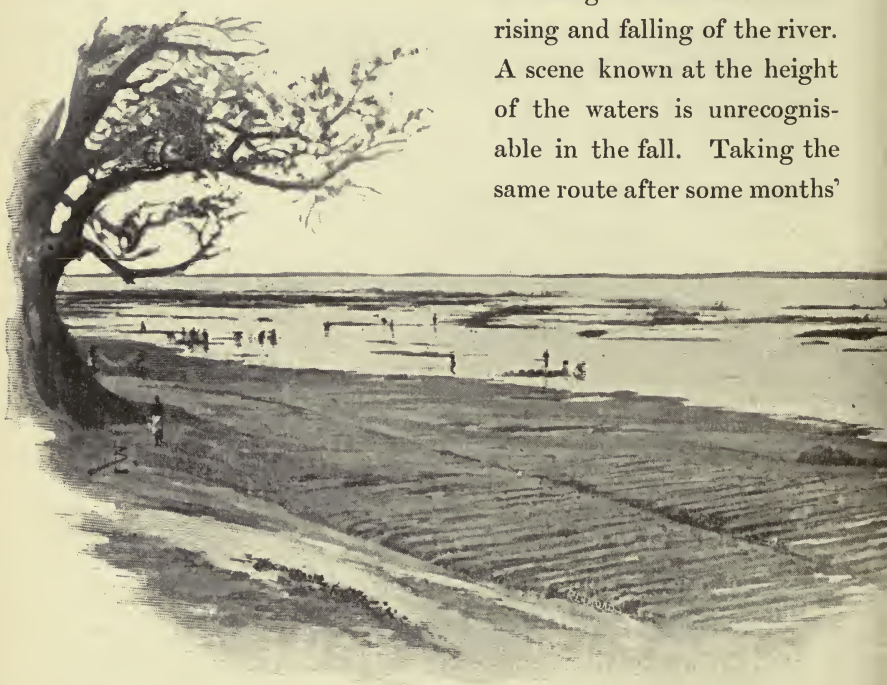
MOUNT ST. HENRI

trees, slenderly erect, dominate a scanty vegetation containing the melancholy green of the olive-trees of Palestine, and thickets of low bushes that recall the fig-trees of Judæa.

El Oual Hadj passed, bright green stretches of quite another character appear, and the villages no longer crowd together upon the bank, but are scattered out of sight, far removed from the river-banks on account of the floods. The only perceptible signs of life come from the fires of these villages, that streak the sky with ribbons of smoke by day and tinge it with red at night. You may travel miles and miles without seeing a living thing, man or beast, upon the shores. An atmosphere of secrecy hovers over the country: you suddenly recall the fact that those mysterious Touaregs are still momentarily its masters and oppressors, and you slip sixteen balls into your Winchester.

Finally, on the borders of Timbuctoo the dunes of the Sahara begin to oppose the sterility of their bare whiteness to the river, increasing in number until the desert itself is behind them.

Varied as these scenes are, they possess a still further element of change in the formidable rising and falling of the river. A scene known at the height of the waters is unrecognisable in the fall. Taking the same route after some months'



OYSTER-BEDS AT SEGU

interval, you seem to be following an entirely different river. Where before you sailed in the midst of plains, you now pass between banks some twenty-six feet high. There, where a vast stretch of water gave the impression of a sea, you find a combination of pools and sandbanks recalling the flat shores of the ocean at low tide. At Timbuctoo it flows in swift and foaming

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torrents, its sides and bed being encumbered with rocks. The towns and villages, at which you had gone ashore to the nearest houses, are now perched upon mounds encircled by vigorously growing grass, and wearing the little airs of a Rhenish *burg*. Fields of tobacco-plants and kitchen gardens flourish on the uncovered banks, while before Segu the oyster-beds pierce the surface of the water. This is in the fall.

All the effects of the rise originate from below Lake Debo, at Mopti, where the river is joined by another as important as itself, namely, the Bani. Towards December they have become a vast mass of waters rushing to the north, and entire plains are submerged to a considerable depth. On the right of Lake Debo an immense region to which the little arm of Koli-Koli formerly gave access, has now become a fief of the Niger. The greatest surprise of all awaits the traveller here, for it is literally a sea of grass. How does that strike you, my luxurious fellow-yachtsmen? It is in truth a singular element, being neither

THROUGH THE SEA OF GRASS

land nor water, but a strange mixture of both; without being a marsh, however, for, the waters not being stagnant, the passing breeze raises no fetid odour. From a depth of six to eight feet the tall grasses emerge, thick and green, and wearing all the appearance of a great field. One of our sheep was so deceived by it that he threw himself overboard, thinking to arrive on pasturage, but committed suicide instead.

Between banks perfectly clear cut, though formed solely by grass, winds that Koli-Koli which has brought hither and spread afar all these waters. The boundaries of Lake Korienza are no less sharply defined in this bizarre element.

In crossing this region my Bosos recommended the abandonment of the easy, but infinitely capricious and winding, course of the Koli-Koli. The journey, they say, will be greatly lessened by cutting straight across this sea of green, a change of route that suits me to perfection.

Paddling being no longer possible, the men, leaning heavily on their bamboos, push the boat vigorously through the grass, which, parting in front, closes together behind us with loud rustling and crackling. We are no longer upon the water, but seem, and it is a truly exotic sensation, to be sliding under a tropical sun over grassy steppes streaked with watery paths. This region of navigable grass is a world apart; the repeated passage of canoes has worn away the green and traced ribbons of water on its surface, in the same manner that the constant tread of man and beast upon the earth destroys the grass and exposes the bare soil. These paths, as conventionality would require of them, are beautifully flowered. Placid water-lilies adorn their surfaces with cups of white, mauve, and yellow, and they are further encompassed by a strange tropical bindweed looking like chaplets of floating onions. With this trivial, perhaps, but

certainly apt, comparison they possess another point of resemblance, they are edible, and are greatly esteemed by the native in times of dearth.

It would be ungrateful if among all these pictures, pale images as they are of hours of enchantment, I forgot to include the twilights and nights upon the Niger.

The moments of sunset upon the river are those the greatest intensity of life. The canoes multiply near the villages bringing the fruit of the field to buildings to which the people will flock for to-morrow's market. The ferry-boat causes the river to resound

THE FERRY-BOAT

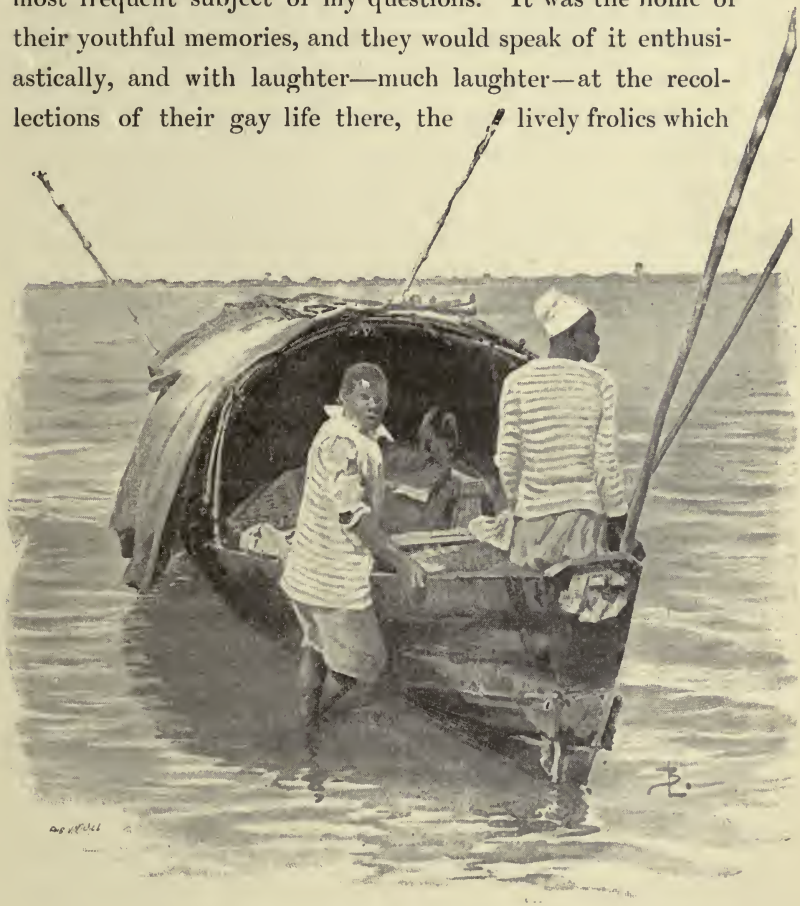
with gay chatter and laughter, the bleating of sheep, and the clucking of frightened poultry. In the solitudes beyond human habitation the timid hippopotamus, again become the autocrat of the river, gambols grotesquely in the water, prudently waiting until nightfall to come ashore and dine; and the great trees on the bank are so whitened at this hour by the

sleeping ospreys that they seem to have been covered by a fall of snow.

I now join a village and spread my table-cloth on some grassy hillock close to the river-bank. Very animated and well attended are my dinners. First the children come, consumed with curiosity to see the white man, but a little apprehensive too. They advance timidly, evidently feeling for me some of the fear which the negro inspires in white children. A few lumps of sugar soon tame them, however, and then, duly apprised, the chief and notabilities of the village arrive. They salute me and offer (read 'sell') presents of milk, eggs, and poultry, and, business being done, I detain them with a little of those two precious commodities, tobacco and salt.

We light great fires as night falls, and they bring out their little clay pipes, their snuff-boxes, or some kola-nuts, and a long gossip ensues. Absorbing landscape all day, night reveals to me the soul and thoughts of the country, its history, and the why of a thousand things the sight of which had puzzled me during the day. Above everything, I enjoyed evoking oral traditions concerning the first appearance of the white man in these parts. Mungo Park, the first European to explore the Niger, is the most vividly remembered. I frequently heard, between Nyamina and Khabara, of Bonci-Ba (the great beard), a name given him by the Nigerian tribes, but I could find no trace of our own Réné Caillié even at Timbuctoo itself. Barth's voyage, though not accomplished in these regions, is well known by report of people who saw him or heard him spoken of in Timbuctoo. The old men, with wrinkled skins and white hair and eyebrows, were my favourite historians. They could recall to me the past prosperity and great commerce of the Valley of the Niger. They told me of the desolating conquerors and disastrous wars of the present cen-

tury; of Cheikou Ahmadou, the fanatic Foulbe king, who changed the prosperity of former days to misery. Timbuctoo was the most frequent subject of my questions. It was the home of their youthful memories, and they would speak of it enthusiastically, and with laughter—much laughter—at the recollections of their gay life there, the lively frolics which



GOING ASHORE IN THE EVENING

sweetened their labours, and the especially vivid remembrance of the bewitching beauty of the ladies of Timbuctoo.

In the villages of the Bosos the Niger formed the basis of our conversation. They would narrate to me the legends and the life

and being of the giant. On the margin of Lake Debo, they told me, a treasure of gold was hidden in the hillock, which Réné Caillié pompously christened 'Mont St. Charles,' and which they call Mount Sorba. The treasure remains undiscovered to this day. They often alluded to a very large town situated on a lake called Guido. It was the centre of a powerful empire, which, with its capital, has now entirely disappeared.

Finally, with so many other affinities to the great oceans, the Niger could not decently lack its romances of pirates. They had their nest at Sibi, a large village crowning a high mound on the Black Niger. It was passed daily by numberless boats laden with the produce of Massina and Farinanka. Kaid-Ali, the chief of the pirates, was taken with the ingenious idea of stretching an iron chain across the river, in order to prevent the escape of these boats, which he pillaged at leisure.

These Bosos, living at a distance of eight hundred and seventy miles from the coast, possess, as one might imagine, no idea of the sea or of the part of outlet that it plays to the rivers. The question of what becomes of the Niger beyond the regions they know troubles them very little. I sometimes attempted, in the course of conversation, to enlighten their minds on this point. Having one day captured an unusually intelligent Bosos, I made him enumerate all the towns he knew, or had heard of, down the Niger. 'Sarafara, Khabara, Gao,' he came to a standstill. 'Well! and beyond them, what becomes of the river?' 'Beyond them,' he reflected. 'Oh! beyond them the fishes swallow it.'

When I found some village particularly rich in information and the power of imparting it, I would stay over the following day in order to renew the nocturnal chat, generally retiring to the river at night on account of its beneficial freshness. In the distance, beacon-like fires blazing on the brim of the great river would

indicate some native ball, and on approaching one could hear the droning of tom-toms and the cadenced clapping of hands that always accompany these functions. Elsewhere, grazing in the now deserted fields, the noctambulating hippopotamus would neigh us his serenades.

Great fires cover the banks in March. It is the black man's method of clearing and manuring his fields on the eve of seed-time. He destroys the tall grasses and other parasites by these means, and enriches his soil with their ashes. Thus magnificently illuminated, we glide over the water to the sound of a great crackling which is occasionally mingled with the cry of some wild animal that the flames have surprised in its lair.

In this manner I wandered so much at my own sweet will that even my Bosos, expert as they are, were obliged to confess themselves bewildered at times. With all these pleasures spiced with the apprehension of a sudden illness or unexpected attack, and sustained by the thought of having some lines of the world's history at the end of my pen when Jenne and Timbuctoo should be attained, am I not right in saying that the cruise of my thatched yacht was a unique one?

CHAPTER III

THE VALLEY OF THE NIGER

The ancient renown of Timbuctoo, its boasted commerce, and its prestige as a rich and powerful metropolis, warrant the assertion *à priori* that the regions surrounding this city of the Niger must be remarkably fertile. It could hardly have usurped such a reputation. History affords no parallel of an error continuing to deceive the world through four or five centuries.

The geographer, sitting in his study between a modern map of Africa and the works of El Bekri, Ca da Mosto, De Baros, Leon the African, and other travellers, would reason thus: With sand to the north-east and west of it the huge market of Timbuctoo is situated on the threshold of the desert. Yet it is not with sand that the wheels of such an enormous traffic are greased. In order, therefore, that Timbuctoo should be enabled to play the part attributed to it, we should expect to find a rich extent of territory in the south, an isthmus of fertility, as it were, jutting into the sea of sand. We should anticipate this stretch of land to be large, since it has maintained a great commerce for some centuries, and supplied such varied markets as Morocco, Tuat, and Tripoli, as well as the various nomad populations of the desert.

Do these fertile regions really possess the happy distinction

of being discoverable by mere force of logic, as certain stars are by mathematical calculation?

The occupation of Timbuctoo has made it possible to verify such surmises by opening up routes, accessible not only to the explorer proper, who crosses the country worn by privation and at the mercy of his guides, but available also for the traveller who lingers to gather complete information at his ease.

This country lying to the south of Timbuctoo is the Sudan, otherwise called the Valley and the Buckler of the Niger, a vast region, traversed to an extent of nearly 2500 miles by one of the largest rivers in the world.

Egypt was happily defined by Herodotus as being the 'present of the Nile.' What Herodotus said of Egypt we might with equal truth say of the Sudan.

The Arabian conqueror Amru, who took possession of Egypt in the seventh century, gives the following complete and accurate description of it in a letter to his master the Khalif Omar.

'O Prince of the Faithful! Picture unto thyself an arid desert and a fruitful country, for such is Egypt. A beneficent river flows majestically through its midst. The rise and fall of its waters are as regular as the course of the sun and the moon. At an appointed time all the springs of the universe come to pay tribute to this king of rivers. They cause its waters to swell and leave their bed, covering the surface of Egypt with a fruitful mire, and when the waters cease to be necessary for the fertilisation of the soil, the obedient river returns to the limits prescribed to it by destiny, in order that the treasures it has hidden in the bosom of the earth may be gathered. The people thus favoured by Heaven sow seeds in the bowels of the earth, that they may be brought to prosperity by the munificence of the Supreme Being who causes harvests to ripen. The most abundant

harvests are succeeded by sudden sterility; and thus it is, O Prince of the Faithful, that Egypt offers successively the images of an arid and sandy desert, a liquid and silvery plain, a marsh of black mire, a green, undulating meadow, and a field of golden grain. Blessed for ever be the Creator of such marvels.'

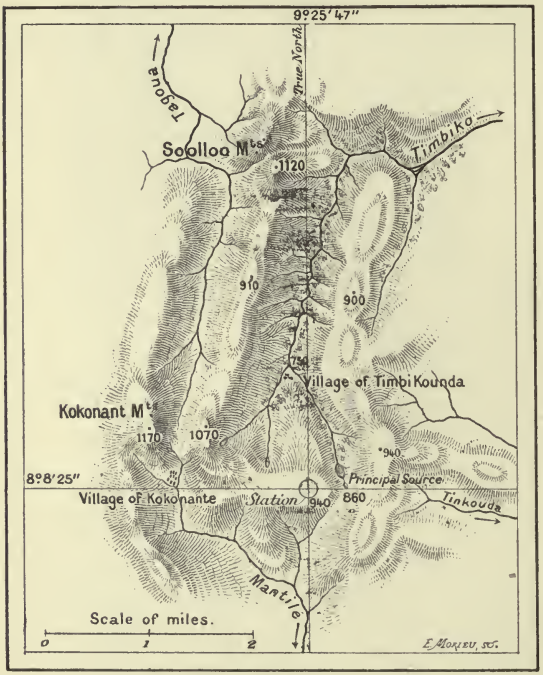
What the Nile has done for Egypt, the Niger has accomplished for the Sudan. In the course of a year we witness the same striking and opposed pictures. The cultivation is as facile as that of Egypt, and is due to the same regular rise and fall of the river. But the Niger shows an even greater munificence in its gifts than does its brother of Eastern Africa. For thousands of years the labour of man has co-operated with the beneficent work of the latter, and yet, flowing imbedded between two mountain chains, it only carries fertility to some few hundreds or thousands of feet; while the Niger, on the other hand, owing to its immense plains, dispenses its benefits over an extent of more than sixty miles without the intervening aid of man.

The prestige of Timbuctoo in the past, and its boasted commerce, are now explained by finding it as we do upon the threshold of another Egypt, equally favoured by nature, but infinitely greater in extent. Its only disadvantages consist in not having been developed by four or five thousand years of civilisation, and in not standing in the doorway of Europe as does the Valley of the Nile.

The Niger rises in the mountain chain which extends from the country of Sulima in the north to Kono in the south, and spreads to the Kissi country in the east. Contrary to the generally accepted opinion, the range is not, geologically speaking, a dependency of that Foota Jallon upheaval which is considered the

THE VALLEY OF THE NIGER'S SOURCE

centre of a great movement whose subordinate branches were pushed beyond the sources of the Niger. In reality, the range of the Niger's sources, or the Kouranko chain, forms the true centre of the upheaval. Its altitudes, in the countries of Negaya and Kono, attain to 3840 feet (sources of the Niger), and 4920 feet in the south, while the average elevation of the Foota Jallon is not more than 2625 feet.



THE SOURCES OF THE NIGER TEMBI

The principal summits of the Kouranko range are: Mount Bondi, Mount Ma, Mount Keina, Mount Konko-Kourawa, the two Kolas, the two Soullous, Mount Kokonante (sources of the Niger), Mount Darou, the needles of Kinki, the Songoula, the Banka, Fingui, Soofoa, Tinki, Owaloo, Kora, and the Toumba (the four last are in the country of Kono).

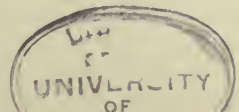
In the Kissi country two rivers, the Paliko and the Tembi, flow towards the north, pursue a parallel course, and, meeting at Laya, unite in one bed to become the Niger or Joliba. The most important of the two rivers is the Tembi, considered by the

natives as the Father of Joliba. It rises in a little hill to the east of Mount Kokonante, and not far from the foot of Mount Darou. The hill from which the Tembi flows is in no way remarkable from a topographical point of view. Bare at its summit, it is covered a little lower down with a vegetation which, growing thicker as it descends towards the waterway of the valley, proclaims the presence of water.

About a hundred feet from the summit of the hill is a little basin, about three feet in diameter and a foot in depth, full of clear water, and called by the natives Tembi Kuntu, or Head of Tembi. A hundred feet further down is another and larger basin, which is not easily found on account of the thick vegetation, the inextricable confusion of thorny canes, trees thrown down by storms, tangles of creepers and tree ferns, in which it is hidden.

The water of this little creek flows through the wood, and re-appears 656 feet lower down in the valley. At this point the Tembi is a mere rivulet; 875 yards from its source it has become, at the village of Tembi Kuntu, a gentle stream, increasing rapidly in size and depth as it flows towards the north. At Nelia, eight miles from the source, it is eighty feet wide, and at Faranna, sixty-two miles from the source, it has attained a breadth of nearly 328 feet.

The wood from which the Tembi springs is reputed sacred, and is the subject of innumerable legends and superstitions. Access to it is denied to the profane; terrible misfortunes overtake any one uttering a word or touching anything there, and warriors and all who have shed blood die on approaching this spot. Its waters are believed to express the judgments of God. If a man is accused of some crime which he denies he is forced to drink of them, and if he is guilty his sin is proved by an inflation of the stomach, followed by instant death.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The natives say that in the centre of the little creek of Tembi is a rocky islet. This little island is the abode of the Spirit of the Spring, and the mysterious retreat of the High Priest who represents the deity to mortals. He takes up his residence there by plunging into the water and approaching it invisibly. According to the legend there is a golden dwelling at the bottom of the lake, and his acolytes, the minor prophets, profess to have heard

THE TEMBI IN THE SACRED WOOD

the noise he makes in opening and shutting the doors of his supernatural home. High priests and lesser priests unite in jealously guarding the approaches to the spring, and the mystery they make of it confers great distinction and authority upon them throughout the country. The neighbouring kinglets refer to them before undertaking a war or other act of importance, and the common herd consult them on all occasions of weight. The Spirit of the Spring, being eminently practical, will

only condescend to attend to them through the medium of sacrifice.

These ceremonies are not very ferocious, merely oxen being offered, and not human victims, as in neighbouring Dahomey. The oxen, however, must be young, as the Spirit likes his meat to be tender. The immolations do not take place at the spring, but in the village of Nalia, where the priests live with their wives and families. When the animal is slaughtered the best portions are cut off, and naturally go to the ministers of the Spirit and their families. The head and legs are left adhering to the skin, which is then stuffed, sewn up, and thrown into the river as it flows past the sacrificial spot. A few paces further on the stream momentarily disappears through a subterranean passage. The stuffed ox disappears with the Tembi, to reappear later on, its head proudly erect, as, apparently overflowing with life, it rears and plunges, appearing and disappearing with the bubbling of the current. Every one then retires satisfied; the Spirit of the Spring and his ministers pleased with the prospect of some first-rate meals, and the people, who had defrayed the costs, charmed by the gambols of their ox.

This Kissi region lies in the ninth latitude, where the last ramifications of the Foota Jallon mountains join the first buttresses of the Kong chain. The source of the Niger is to be found there, and it is *par excellence* the land of heavy rainfalls. From February to July the water falls from the skies in veritable torrents. The gentle slopes of the mountain ranges are channelled by innumerable cascades, rivulets, brooks, and rivers, that carry off the heavenly overflow. It is not surprising, therefore, that at Kouroussa, although the river has received only three tributaries of importance, it has already acquired an imposing bed. The further it advances, the larger and more numerous

A WATERFALL IN THE VALLEY OF THE NIGER'S SOURCE

MAP OF THE NIGERIAN REGIONS AS FAR AS TIMBUCTOO

become the waters by which it is swelled. These supplies cease abruptly above Bammaku, and from there to Diafaraba the river is almost solitary.

It is between Tembi-Kuntu and Diafaraba that we meet with the first of a homogeneous series of naturally irrigated zones. The left bank is narrow, and descends in a gentle slope to the Niger, the Foota Jallon range closely bordering and not quitting it until after Koulikoro. The right bank, however, is free, and forms a large plain, which is splendidly watered by the crowd of tributaries that run parallel to the great river.

The latter does not squander its miracles on this first zone, which is already so richly dowered with precious waters that its co-operation would be superfluous. These countries of the Upper Niger are radiant. Tropical vegetation spreads over them with the utmost prodigality, its orange, citron, kola, and banana trees delighting the eyes of the European.

The Niger is accumulating its forces as it crosses this region, and its inundations are unimportant, scarcely overflowing the banks by half a mile. The giant is reserving his strength that he may transform into opulent plains the immense stretches of sand that await his coming from here to Diafaraba. The river pauses for a moment below Bammaku, in front of the rocky barrier of Sotouba, in order to gather up and concentrate, before approaching the sand, the formidable mass of waters sent by the heavens during the previous five months. Then in the plenitude of its strength it rushes on towards the north, passing Nyamina, Segu, and Sansanding on its way.

Having cleared Diafaraba, it arrives, towards September, impetuous and swollen, at Mopti, where it is joined by a monster tributary, the Bani, with a mass of waters as formidable as its own. With such a reinforcement, the army of waters has

grown immense, infinite. Its bed is now too narrow, it stifles between the banks. In front, behind, upon all sides, it seeks outlets, hurling itself into the least depression, and invading the smallest passage. And now takes place what I shall call the intoxication of the Niger.

Happy intoxication! if such it be. The river flings itself headlong over the entire low-lying region between Diafaraba and Timbuctoo, covering it and swamping it, until a steppe of barren sand becomes one of the most fertile spots in the universe. It has for centuries drifted a beneficent vegetable mud into these low-lying countries, effacing the sand and transforming this region into a granary of plenty. We find there not one delta, as in Egypt, but three.

The first is from Diafaraba to the approaches of Lake Debo. On its left bank, having found two auspicious outlets, the Niger forms the pools of Diarka and Bourgoo. Its principal branch runs in a parallel direction, and flows with its two arms into the Debo. Its waters are still so abundant, in spite of this distribution of its forces, that the three streams communicate with one another by means of natural channels. The Bani connects itself with the Niger in the same manner on the right bank.

Thus a most thorough and complete system of irrigation is formed, to which man has not needed to put his hand; and fertility is spread over thousands of square miles. The rise and fall of these waters is as regular as those of the Nile, and an infinitely greater distance is covered. At Mopti, for example, you can calculate in September ninety miles from east to west inundated to a depth of eight or nine feet.

The countries of Sana, Bourgoo, Massina, Jenneri, and Kunari are situated in this delta.

The second extends from Lake Debo to El Oual Hadj. Here

THE REGION OF THE THREE DELTAS

the Niger again divides into three branches. The least important, the Koli-Koli, rises south of Lake Debo; the Barra Issa or Black Niger, and the Issa Ber or White Niger, north of the lake. The Koli-Koli traverses Lake Korienza and joins the Black Niger at Sarafara, the latter being in its turn united with the White Niger near El Oual Hadj.

Like the Bani and the Niger, like the Niger and the pools of Diarka and Bourgoo, these three branches communicate with one another by means of winding channels, and we find everywhere the same system of irrigation accompanied by the same wonderful fertility. Nor is this all. On the left bank, at the extreme limit of inundation, the river finds a new formula for its gifts in an admirable series of lakes, twelve in number, and separated by chains of hills. The following are the names of eleven of them, counting from south-west to north-east: the Kabura, Tenda, Sumpi, Takadji, Sanaki, Horo, Fati, Goro, Dauna, Tela, and the Faguibina.

The floods fill these lakes by means of gullies more or less wide. Those of the Fati, Horo, and Takadji are particularly wide and open to commerce at any time of the year. Others are clear for certain months (October to March), and are then obstructed by weeds, not, however, to the extent of impeding the passage of small canoes. The borders of these lakes, like the banks of the river they rival in fertility, are alternately flooded and left bare for a distance of some hundreds of yards.

The lakes of Tela, Faguibina, and Dauna form depressions to a depth of thirty-three feet below the mean level of the Niger. They are fed by means of gullies and subterranean infiltration. At the height of the floods, by simply scraping the ground with your hand, you can find water anywhere on the surface between the river and the lakes.

This chaplet of lakes forms an ingenious system of reservoirs for the formidable masses of water discharged by the Niger and Bani united. They return a portion of their water by means of gullies and channels as the floods subside. To the second delta belong the countries of Guimbala, Farimanka, Aoussa-Kattawal, Seno Krou-ku, Fituka, and Sobundu-Samba.

The third delta occupies the valley extending from El Oual Hadj to Khabara, the port of Timbuctoo. After El Oual Hadj the river pursues a solitary course to its mouth.

This zone of irrigation is formed in the following manner:— Numerous natural channels connect the Tela and Faguibina lakes with the left bank of the river, the most important of them going by the name of the Pool of Gundam. On the right bank a new series of lakes and the Pools of Guaki and Kuna are scattered over the north-east of the valley. Unfortunately these lakes are only known by name, but according to the latest information they are twenty-three in number; among them are the Kangara, Dinaguira, Doumba, Labou, Hongonta, Fatta, Tahetant, Tibouraguina, Do, Gakora, Tengueral, Titoulawina, Agwabada, Garo, Haribongo, Kherba, Tibouraghina, Dadji, Fankora, and the Marmar.

This delta comprises Kissou, Killi, Surayamo, Aribinda, and Gurma.

Retarded thus by innumerable and remote digressions, by liberalities great and small, it is not until January that the Niger reaches Timbuctoo. Driven back there by the sands of the Sahara, it takes a sharp turn to the east, the dunes closely following it on the left bank and preventing it from spreading to its full width. On the right bank, however, the country is once more favourable for inundations, and the Niger makes its fertilising power manifest in channels and lakes which

irrigate the country by natural means and give this Bamba region a widespread reputation for wealth.

The course of the river to the east is now suddenly arrested by the granite range of Taosay. It forces a narrow passage for a while, and then, wearied with struggling against these rocky masses, it makes straight for the south. Here again the left bank proves inhospitable, while the Niger continues its customary marvellous transformations on the right. Its progress is so greatly retarded here that it is not until the middle of July that it arrives at Say with its full complement of water, and it finally reaches the mouth in September. Nearly a year therefore has it taken this immense mass of water from the regions of the Upper Niger to reach, considerably lessened in bulk, the Atlantic Ocean.

We have now seen that Nature has neglected nothing to make these southern lands fit to maintain a commerce so important as that of Timbuctoo. Cattle-rearing and agriculture attain to an extreme degree of perfection, and one fondly pictures the wealth that might be drawn from a country so marvellously constructed.

CHAPTER IV

THE TOWNS OF THE NIGER

'PREPARE to receive cavalry! . . . Mar-r-r-ch!' This command uttered in a ringing voice, a clang of arms and a great clatter of feet, were the first sounds I heard on awakening in one of the casemates of Fort Bammaku. Somewhat bewildered, I question my servant, who is squatting in the corner waiting for me to open my eyes. 'It is the soldiers being drilled,' he says, and, peeping through one of the loopholes, I see a square of negroes, bristling with bayonets.

Bammaku is the first fort upon our route that contains military apparatus and a garrison. The critical circumstances under which it was built are curiously reflected in its structure. It is simply a great rectangular wall with none of the ingenuity of modern construction about it; but a superabundance of loopholes everywhere—in the stables, the powder-magazines, the rooms, and the kitchen. They had to build quickly in 1883 and content themselves with the merely necessary; for Samory was still

terrorising the country when Colonel Borgnis-Desbordes planted the first French flag upon the Niger. A little troop of infantry intrenched in a neighbouring redoubt held the position while the Chinese hastily raised these primitive fortifications; the hordes of blacks multiplying the while, and Samory himself coming to command this last and decisive engagement. As ammunition was giving out, the Colonel and his staff joined in the *mêlée*. Borgnis-Desbordes, running to repell the last assault, said to his companions, 'Better keep the last charge in your revolvers, for when we have served the rest it will be time to think of ourselves.'

If Bammaku is not yet a purely administrative centre, like Bafoulaba, Badumba, and Kita, it is not because this part of the country needs a display of strength (it is no less peaceful than that through which I have just passed), but because it is situated in the very centre of our colony, and forms an important strategic point from which it is easy to send reinforcements to any part that may be momentarily threatened.

This precaution is wise. For do we really know how far we are masters of this splendid country, which is many times larger than France, and contains from ten to fifteen millions of people? We have a fleet of two gunboats and some iron barges armed with mitrailleuses, upon the Niger, commanded by a naval lieutenant and a midshipman; the crew is black, as are all the troops garrisoning the interior. Except the servers of the field-pieces, there is not a single white private in the country. Officers and petty officers alone are Europeans, and the respective numbers of blacks and whites occupying the immense Sudan are: six hundred Europeans, including officers, petty officers, doctors, veterinaries, officials, and telegraph-clerks, and four million negroes enrolled as foot-soldiers, cavalry, and transport-bearers.

When we realise that we have only occupied this country for the last ten years, and that it is three or four times as large as Algeria (which requires an army of 40,000 men to maintain it), we find the necessary controlling force in the Sudan to be as surprisingly as it is delightfully small.[1]

The town of Bammaku is situated between the fort and the river, not immediately upon its banks but at a distance of a quarter of a mile; that is to say, on the limits of inundation. Its aspect is most charming, thanks to the initiative and intelligence of the officers who have successively commanded it. They have well taken to heart their *rôle* of civilising medium, and have made (between its rows of white dwellings built of rammed clay) roads, which they have bordered with trees that give a most welcome shelter.

They have also laid out great squares where the superbly tall cheese-tree spreads its parasol-like foliage. A large building shelters the native market, and not far from it are two shops containing European merchandise. A negro, armed with an old sabre, acts the part of superintendent of police and looks after the town property. This Europeanising does not displease

[1] This is how our conquest has been organised :—The Sudan is divided into regions, the regions into circles, and these again into posts. The first are five in number. The government resides provisionally in the first region, that of Kayes (though logically the centre of the colony should be at Bammaku). Its circles are those of Nioro, Kita, Bafoulaba, and its posts, Selibaba and Gumbu. Other European centres are : Medina, Dinguirai, Dioubaba, and Badumba. Second, the southern region. Centre : Bissandugu (ancient capital of Samory). Circles : Siguiri, Farannah, Erimakono, Kissidugu. Posts : Kankan, Beyla, Kerwana, Kuroussa. Third, the eastern region on the left bank of the river and to the right across the valley of the Niger. Centre : Bammaku. Circle : Bougouni. Posts : Koulikoro and Toulimandio. Fourth, the north-east region on both sides of the river. Centre : Segu. Circles : Jenne, Sokolo, Bandiagara. Posts : Mopti and Gourao on Lake Debo, headquarters of the flotilla. Fifth, the northern region comprising the lakes of the north valley. Centre : Timbuctoo. Circles : Gundam and Sarafara. Post : El Oual Hadj. A superior officer is at the head of each region ; captains administer the circles ; and officers of different grades command the posts.

the natives in the least. Every year sees the town increase and new roads constructed, while rapid strides are being made towards regaining its ancient prosperity, which was destroyed by El Hadj Omar and Samory out of sheer envy.

The great encompassing plain is no less enchanting to loko at. Partly inundated and partly irrigated by numerous rivulets, there is no need to dilate upon its obvious fertility, and I pass on to speak at greater length of the three kinds of tree which grow so abundantly in the fields, bush, and rocky ledges of this region.

The most interesting of the three is the karita or butter-tree, and is best represented among our trees by the pear, the similarity of their leaves being remarkable. The bark and trunk are rugged like those of the chestnut-tree. Its branches develop in the form of a dome, and should attain to great dimensions. A fully developed karita is unfortunately a rare sight; for the natives take no care (in their fields or elsewhere) to preserve this tree, which they have neither to plant nor to cultivate, and whose fruit can always be gathered to satiety. I know no tree in the whole of Western Africa more valuable for the services it renders the native or for those it will soon be called upon to render the European.

It first attracted my attention at Dion at the close of a day's journey that had been prolonged until nightfall. When we finally reached the village in which we had arranged to spend the night, great was my surprise at inhaling an unmistakable odour of chocolate. Some European has forestalled me, I thought, and I made inquiries for him among the inhabitants. No, not another white man in the place. Whence this delectable odour, then? Guided by the perfume I presently found a large earthen pot confronting me, in which a dark brown mass was boiling. This was

the karita, and they were boiling its nuts to obtain the butter they yield, and it was thence the well-known fumes escaped.

This nut is enclosed in a flesh that resembles the peach in taste, and is made into a sweetmeat by the natives. The nut is shelled and set to dry and harden; in this state its red-brown colour, aroma, and taste are completely analogous to our cocoa. The Sudanese, though not yet initiated into the joys of chocolate, make a very ingenious use of it, nevertheless. They obtain, by a process similar to that of making cocoa-nut butter, a product of the first necessity, vegetable butter; and throughout the whole of the Sudan no other fatty substance is used, the great white blocks of karita possessing the inestimable advantage of never going bad.

The European will undoubtedly find a still more profitable use for this tree later on, for on incision it yields a gutta-percha—a product for which many industries are now anxiously seeking, for its supply has diminished in proportion to the increase of demand.

In the neighbourhood of the karita grows another curious tree, the nata. After the butter-tree the flour-tree. This flour, sold in all the markets of the region, is enclosed in large pods; it is of a yellow colour and singularly rich in sugar, so much so that I have seen it used by Europeans in the manufacture of confectionery and pastry.

It would be difficult to say too much about the third tree found in these parts, the cheese-tree. Not satisfied with providing her negro with butter and pastry, Dame Nature has benevolently adorned the branches of this tree with camenberts and livarots. This tree (called baga or bamanbi by the natives) also produces capsules, from which very fine and brilliant filaments escape. So much do they resemble the precious threads

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THE ROCKY BARRIER AT SOTOUBA

of the cocoon that the name of vegetable silk has been given them. Nor is this the only Sudanese plant to furnish this miracle: the follicle of a very abundant anemone is equally full of a lustrous silk; while in the second delta of the Niger I have frequently observed a large plant growing to about the height of a man and bearing a pretty mauve blossom which is furnished in the same manner.

The principal articles of commerce sent by Bammaku to Timbuctoo are gold, kola-nuts, karita, and arachides. It would doubtless send cereals and other of its abundant products if the river permitted of direct relations being established between the two cities.

At a little distance down the Niger, however, its bed is encumbered by the great barrier of Sotouba, forming one of the most picturesque scenes in the Sudan. I visited it just at the fall of the waters, and found that a formidable chaos of bitumen-coloured rocks had been uncovered on the left bank, while a terribly swift

A WORKSHOP ON THE BANKS OF THE NIGER

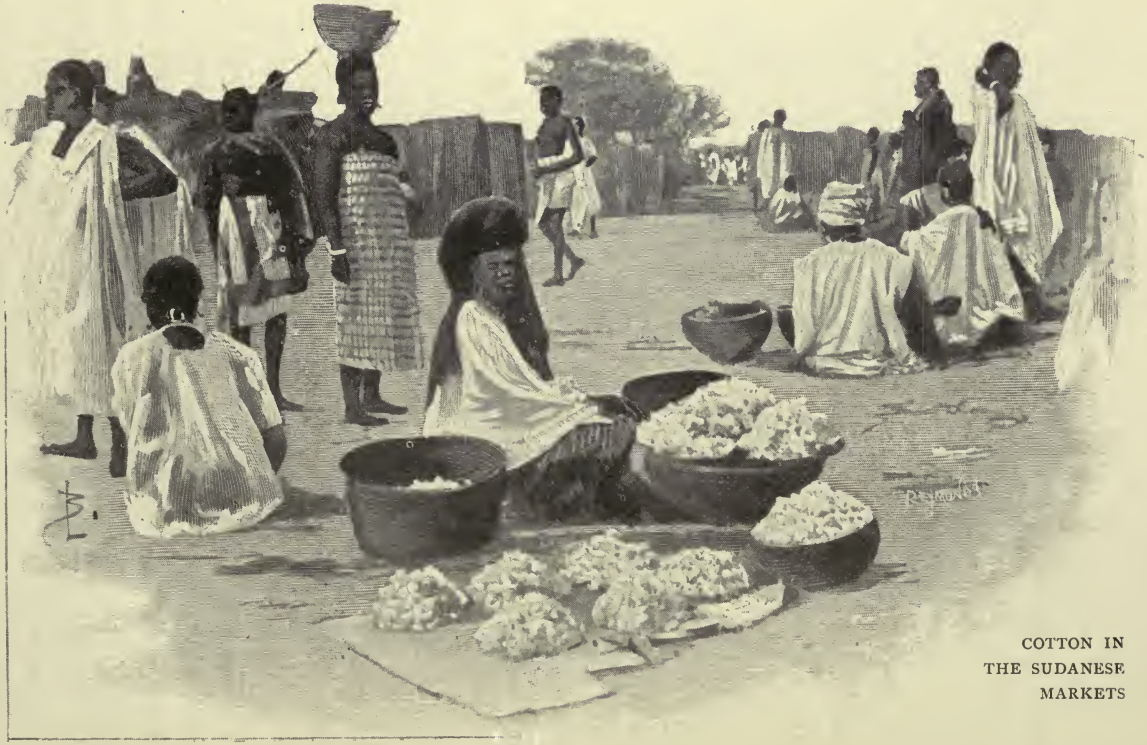
and foaming rapid extended as far as the eye could see upon the right.

The passage of Sotouba is only practicable at the height of the waters when the rocks are covered and the river is one enormous and very dangerous rapid. The current is so swift that a canoe from Bammaku arrives at Toulimandio, a distance of twenty-five miles, in three hours. At this latter place the course of the river is more normal, and we have made a little harbour from which travellers, bound for the north of the Sudan, come and go.

It has no garrison, but merely possesses a dwelling of vaguely European type, built of rammed clay and thatched after the fashion of the native hut. A tricolour flag waves from its roof, and under it live an artillery sergeant and a gunner, closely recalling the two sappers of Dioubaba; only, instead of being occupied with trains and playing at stationmaster, the artilleryman is admiral and commander of the fleet of transport barges.

The two men live surrounded by monkeys, guinea-fowls, and poultry, and their contentment rivals that of the comrades of Bakoy. A youthful alligator supplies the place of the hippopotamus, but does not display the same amiable desire to be tamed. He would make a mouthful of the hand ill-advised enough to attempt a caress; he has a strong chain attached to him, and is fastened up like a dog. There is only one thing that troubles these sons of the soil: they cannot understand why the natives do not labour to obtain even greater profit from the rich extents of fertility at their disposal. 'They should send the fools to France to be taught how to work,' is their recommendation.

Some ten miles south of Toulimandio we have established a shipyard on a pretty, rocky promontory of the Niger. Its name



COTTON IN
THE SUDANESE
MARKETS

is Koulikoro, and its neighbouring forests supply the wood from which the barges are concocted. These boats are something between a whaler and a canoe in shape, and officers, privates, travellers, and stores circulate up and down the river upon them. The director and workmen of the shipyard are all natives of Senegal.

It is an amusingly primitive and exotic arsenal that is represented upon the river-bank. The workshops are leafy vaults; and benches, with forges, lathes, and pyramids of planks, lie scattered round the feet of mighty trees. The forms of toiling carpenters, blacksmiths, and sawyers mingle with those of their wives and children washing and bathing in the stream. Horses and other animals browse contentedly near, and the whole forms a delightful babel of laughter, blows of the hammer, neighing, saw-grinding, chatter, and bleating.

Further on, with Nyamina and Sansanding we reach the cotton district. Large fields are consecrated to the cultivation of this valuable plant, and it is here those beautiful fabrics known as *pagnes de Segu* are made. They are patterned in deep indigo, and are in great request in Senegal, in the markets of Timbuctoo, and among the inhabitants of the coast, who greatly prefer them to the European textiles.

Nyamina reposes gracefully at the far end of a little creek on the left bank of the Niger. This town is as gay and animated as possible, possessing, not one, but many markets in which the products of this rich country of Sarro are exchanged. Not only is there no fort nor garrison, there is not even a single European here, the government of town and country being in the hands of a native chief.

Segu, on the contrary, distant two days' journey on the right

WEAVERS ON THE BANKS OF THE NIGER

river-bank, is strongly fortified ; partly in its character of ancient bulwark of the Toucouleur dominion and capital of El Hadj Omar, and partly because it is the stronghold of the central valley of the Niger. Seen from the river its appearance is very attractive, with its massive gates and its walls zig-zagging like the folds of a screen. At the far end a conglomeration of points produces the illusion of a strong castle bristling with battlements. This edifice was the fantastic creation of the town's first governor, an

SEGU

artillery officer, and it lodges the European staff, provision and ammunition stores. Its architect was inspired by the bizarre and vague efforts at adornment on the palaces of the kings of Segu. The ornaments with which they sought to soften the high bare walls which made their palaces look like prisons were, it appears, imported by masons from Jenne. With these models before him, the ingenuity of the artilleryman, combined with negraic masonry, resulted in a very queer product indeed. Seen close, it resembles a porcupine, or some large cathedral organ with a multitude of pipes. Unfortunately the sun-dried bricks of which it is built are inconsistency itself, and every rainy season sees the pilasters melt away like sugar-plums. Alas! three times over, this curiosity will not live to amuse our sons.

The town is populous, busy, and lively, but its interior does not fulfil the promise of its outward show. It is a pity that no one has taken the trouble to make the vistas and squares that give so much charm to Bammaku. The royal palace is its only

SEGU : THE ANCIENT PALACE OF AHMADOU TRANSFORMED INTO A FORT (EXTERIOR)

object of interest, and of that not much more than the walls have been left standing. The interior has been destroyed and altered to suit our tastes and necessities, and it was but the carcase of Ahmadou's (son of El Hadj Omar) palace that furnished the artilleryman with a model for his amazing monument. As for the abode of the famous negro conqueror, a cabbage plot grows where his harem was wont to flaunt its black beauty, and a post-office stands upon the site of his treasury.

This post-office is the last and most northern of the fourteen scattered about the Sudan. Hereafter we shall only find second-hand ones—that is to say, a petty officer who ensures the departure

THE FORT OF SEGU :
VIEW OF THE INTERIOR

and delivery of letters in every occupied town. Once a fortnight a French mail arrives and departs timed to reach Dakar the day before the large steamers touch there. These mails, enclosed in waterproof bags, cross the country by means of relays of porter

ARRIVAL OF THE COURIER : SEGU

being carried in canoes on the Niger at the rate of thirty-five miles a day.

In addition the Sudan is provided with 1860 miles of telegraph lines. Segu is their northern limit, and it would be tedious to insist upon the value, from the point of view of security alone, of these little threads to a young colony. Not less useful are they as an instrument of public information, a gazette ; a happy innovation for countries where newspapers only arrive some months old. Twenty words from France arrive daily in Senegal. This despatch, consisting of a summary of the day's events, is transmitted to Kayes, and from there it is re-telegraphed from office to office across the country. It is communicated by letter to places that

have no telegraph. These summaries are written out and attached to the doors of offices and forts throughout the country, and by their means the colonist lives in touch from day to day with the mother-country.

Sansanding, twelve hours ditsant by the Niger from Segu, is situated, like Nyamina, in a creek on the left bank. There is no soldier or white man here either.

Besides protecting and governing, we instituted a new form of rule for the Sudan. It was initiated by Colonel Archinard, one of its most intelligent governors.

Amongst the wise reforms instituted in Senegal by Faidherbe, the one that rendered most signal service was the establishment of the School of Hostages at St. Louis. The sons of kings, kinglets, and the great chiefs of Senegambia are educated there on European lines. They are inoculated with modern culture

POSTAL CANOE ON THE NIGER

and ideas, and are taught to share the French hopes and ideals for the future of these vast countries of the Sudan.

Arrived at manhood, the sons either assist their fathers in a government to which they will succeed, or they enter the Senegalese or Sudanese services, civil and military. Some are officers,

and others are utilised in the administration and telegraph offices, while many fill the important post of interpreter.

Mademba, son of a chief of Walo (of considerable authority in matters of religion and politics), was educated in this manner. He entered the telegraphic department somewhere about 1868, and rendered devoted service for twenty years to the cause of French occupation. He followed Colonel Borgnis-Desbordes and Colonel Archinard in their respective expeditions up the Niger; and the latter, wishing to reward his devotion, created for him a little kingdom on the left bank of the river, with Sansanding as his capital.

This idea of governing the negroes of the Sudan by a Senegalese negro educated in accordance with our ideas was a lucky hit. It is a living and daily example to these people, an encouragement to them to receive the education we offer. When we remember with what modest means we occupy the Sudan, we recognise how inestimable this moral force of education must be.

BEARER OF AN URGENT MESSAGE

When the commanders of neighbouring forts have occasion to collect provisions of cereals, recruit tirailleurs, assemble porters, or no matter what, they can rely upon Mademba as they would upon a European. Any white man passing through Sansanding, whatever his position may be, receives the welcome of a friend. If you appeal to his assistance, even after only having once seen him, Mademba will perform the impossible in order to serve you.

Although a Mussulman himself, he so appreciates the benefits he received from a European education, that he sends his sons to the Christian school of St. Louis, subscribes to our papers, and keeps up with the news and politics of France. Colonial movement more especially engages his attention, and he gives it practical encouragement in his kingdom. He sends to Paris for various seeds, and endeavours to introduce new growths into the country. He has an experimental garden on the banks of the Niger, and I have seen corn, and plum and peach trees, etc., trying to grow there. The natives have noticed all this, and respect him accordingly. 'Mademba is not a negro,' they say, 'he is a tou bab' (European), not meaning by this that he has renounced his race and colour, but to express their pride in the fact that one of their number has raised himself to the level of those white men whose culture is their perpetual astonishment. The Europeans indorse this judgment and treat him in every way as one of themselves. I need scarcely say that I passed many interesting hours at the court of King—or, as the natives say, Fama—Mademba. A most diverting mixture of European and native customs obtains there. His house is built in a succession of courts cut in battlements, and the whole is enclosed with high walls after the fashion of native palaces. It is at one and the same time a farm, barracks, country house, and royal dwelling, just like the kingly palaces of Homer. In the first court you pass through groups of horses, women, sheep, children, and ducks and hens; in the second, clusters of

ENTRANCE TO MADEMBA'S PALACE

servants, armed or otherwise, are measuring rice and millet seed, or selling barrels of salt, tobacco, and kola-nuts. In Mademba's own apartments, amongst the skins spread about on the floor for the accommodation of a native audience, were comfortable arm-chairs, tables, books, pen and ink, lamps and candlesticks, a thousand objects trifling in themselves but interesting enough when found under a negro's roof.

Mademba has retained the religion of his father, and most of his subjects practise Islamism. Although discarding some of its usages, he has preferred to preserve the custom of polygamy.

Towards evening, as the mares and colts were brought in from the fields under his vigilant eyes, I sat beside him with my glass of water perfumed with some drops of absinthe; and melancholy were the glances he cast upon his own 'undefiled tumbler.' His retinue was numerous, and he had too much tact to scandalise them by drinking his water anything but neat, nor did he neglect to prostrate himself in the prayer that every good Mussulman must say at sunset. But no sooner did we find ourselves *tête-à-tête* at dinner, waited on by familiar servants (Senegalese like their master), than red wine and champagne from the royal cellars filled both our tumblers, nor was a final glass of Chartreuse forgotten. The repast was served in European fashion, plates and knives being changed with each course, a little luxury I had not always met with in the Sudan at the tables of white people. In contrast to all this, the wardrobe of the king retained its local colour. He wore a red fez and

A COURTYARD IN MADEMBA'S PALACE

a long mantle (like the priestly cope), dark green in colour and heavily embroidered in gold. He wore, moreover, various decorations, among which I noticed that of the legion of honour. I will not deny that he had something of the stage monarch about him and might have come out of a theatrical wardrobe-shop, but his appearance was in no way inharmonious; and how ridiculous he would have looked in frock-coat and top-hat!

FAMA MADEMBA

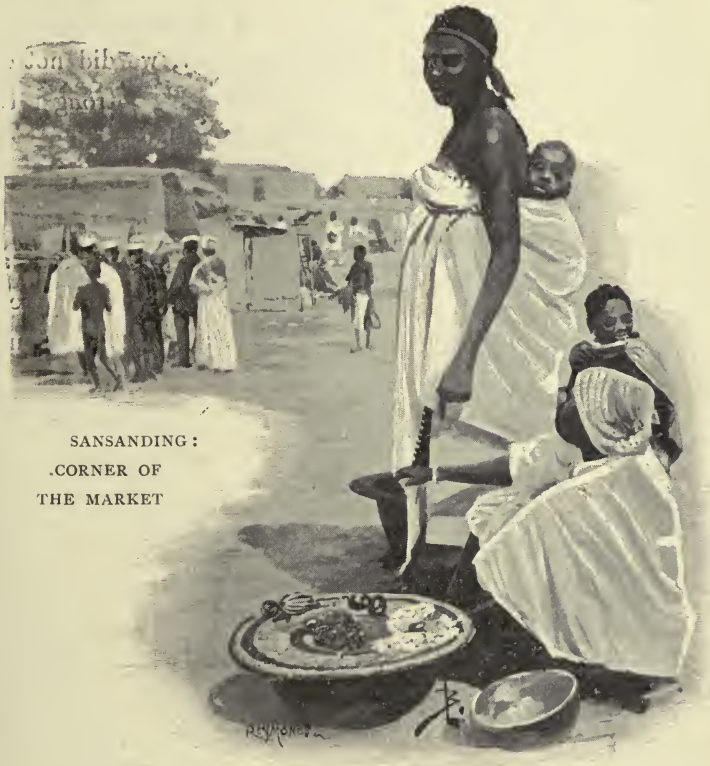
Having scoured the country for so many years, and being by nature an observer gifted with a keen judgment, Mademba was a perfect treasure-house of information. He had a complete knowledge of native idioms, and could express himself in French with ease. He gave me an account of the ancient splendour of Sansanding, and entered into the reasons of its decadence, recounted his heroic resistance against the Toucouleurs, and showed me how he was slowly rebuilding his kingdom. The explanation of many things came

to me in this way: the speedy submission of the Sudan, and, above all, its rapid pacification, and the security of completely isolated Europeans, like the two artillerymen at Toulimandio.

Mademba sent for a chief of the town in order that I might receive enlightenment at the fountain-head. He was an old man, Bossissa by name, withered and whitened by age, whose energies had all ebbed into his eyes. His grandfather was the most powerful shipowner in Sansanding a hundred years ago; the greater part of the canoes trading with Timbuctoo were his, and his slaves were to be counted by hundreds. Mungo Park was his guest in 1805, and his descendants have preserved more than one reminiscence of the hardy explorer which shall be recounted later on.

'Thou hast seen our city in ruins,' said Bossissa; 'its houses deserted and falling in pieces. Thou hast beheld our most unhappy Mosque. And when thou shalt be returned into the country of thy fathers, thou shalt say: I have seen Sansanding, and it is a city in ruins, a city of nothingness. But yet thou hast not seen our city, neither has the Fama beheld it. This beard and these white hairs alone have seen it. And at that time the city was cheerful and well built, containing many markets. The people were full of contentment, and were apparelled in the fine garments and rich clothing of Arabia which were brought by our canoes from Timbuctoo, together with many things both beautiful and pleasant. All this suffered sudden change forty years ago. It was the will of God! Men came from the south hungered and thirsting for blood, as the hyena comes seeking corpses. El Hadj Omar was at their head. From the west he brought them, saying unto them: "The Djoliba takes its source in Mecca. To look upon it is to make a pilgrimage unto the Holy City. All who bathe in it shall be

received in Paradise." We were good Mussulmans here, but they made war against us for the sake of our wealth. We fought long, and conquered many times, but our city was taken from us and set in ruins. Our people left their country. My friends wished me to depart also, but I made answer, "I will rather



SANSANDING: CORNER OF THE MARKET

die where my father died." A life of sadness began. The Toucouleurs destroyed and pillaged; many of the inhabitants had nothing left to them but their two ears. The fields were no longer cultivated. The country returned to the bush, and wild animals peopled it. Hyænas came to our very doors and

UNIVERSITY OF

carried away our children in the twilight. Then the Frenchmen came, and Segu was destroyed, and the Toucouleurs were swept away, and joy returned to the country. Peace reigns among us; he who does evil is of a certainty punished. Now that the harvest is no longer stolen, the fields are once more cultivated. We can travel without fear; a child, knowing its way, may walk alone along the roads. Merchants sleep in safety in the bush far from all habitations; while, formerly, we did not dare to go beyond the town. When we met others stronger than ourselves, they seized us and made us their slaves. The weak village was at the mercy of the powerful. But to-day all are equal and contented, and one may not do wrong unto another.

'It is to the white man that we owe this; and dost thou still ask why we are satisfied with their presence and wherefore we rejoice in it? Dost thou not now understand why the country submits unto thee and is peaceful?'

THE BOSOS IN THE BOW ABRUPTLY CEASED PLYING THEIR BAMBOO POLES

CHAPTER V

JENNE

At the village of Kouakoru we abandoned the Niger for one of those natural channels which carry fertility afar by their floods.

About twelve hours after we had left the main stream, to my sudden astonishment, the Bosos in the bow abruptly ceased plying their long bamboo poles. Sheltered as I was under my thatched hollow, the horizon was completely hidden from me, and I could see nothing but water and raised banks. Unable to understand their sudden inaction, I prepared to blow them up. They turned at my appeal in open-mouthed surprise, silently pointing to some object that was invisible to me; then, with voices barely audible from emotion, they murmured, 'Jenne!' They were overwhelmed by the sight of an unknown town; they, who knew great cities like Segu, Nyamina, and Sansanding! Here was something that I had never seen before, either, and shall never see again, namely, a negro surprised and affected, not by some

European invention, but by a spectacle of his own country. I hastened forward, and stood astonished in my turn; for the first time in these regions I was astounded by the work of man.

Curious and beautiful sights had not been wanting on my journey, but there was always something lacking to the eye and mind of a cultivated man, some trace of civilisation that should evoke the genius of humanity; for, in spite of all that has been said about the mutilations and sacrileges to which man has subjected the great works of nature, one must confess to finding these great works somewhat incomplete when one has seen nothing else for a long time. The valley of the Loire, clothed solely in its own virgin robe, is a beautiful sight, but set with those precious stones called Amboise, Tours, Chambord, Chenonceaux, it becomes marvellous.

Jenne is the jewel of the valley of the Niger.

Here is the picture engraved upon my memory as I sat perched in the bow among my Bosos. A vast plain, infinitely flat, without a touch of relief; no villages nor any other sign of humanity, only now and again some trees at long intervals,

showing as dark spots upon the yellow-green expanse. In the very midst of this solitude is a circle of water, and within it, rising victorious (like the summit of the palm-tree amidst the

sands of the desert), is reared a long mass of high and regular walls, erected on mounds as high, and nearly as steep, as themselves. A forest of projections crowns them with terraced roofs, palms, gable-ends, stairs, and dome-like trees; a whole smiling life salutes me from the height of this little island.

It is sunset, and the violent contrast of tropical light and shade intensifies the effect. It is an impressive scene at this hour, and fully justifies the emotion of my Bosos. The high mass of the town is dark against the sky and the bare immensity of the plain that flames right and left of it; and Jenne stands out without transition from the brilliance of land and sky. It seems as if all there was of life had sought refuge on this mountain isle which rises protectingly and majestically from the distance.

As my boat approaches by the channel that branches at

right angles towards the heart of the town, the banks and walls of the city emerge in greater proportions from the encircling water. At their feet I can distinguish a harbour filled with large boats that have nothing in common with the accustomed pirogue. They are large and strange in form, like the city that shelters them.

When I have climbed the banks and entered the walls, my surprise takes a definite form, and I am completely bewildered and thrown out of reckoning by the novelty and strangeness of the town's interior. Surely the angel of Habakkuk has suddenly transported me a thousand leagues away from the Sudan. For it is not in the heart of a country of eternally similar huts (childish in their simplicity and confusion) that I should look to find a real town. Yes, a real town in the European sense of the

JENNE: A CORNER OF THE TOWN

word; not one of those disorderly conglomerations of dwellings which we call towns in this country. Here are true houses; not primitive shelters crowned with roofs that are either flat or in the

shape of an inverted funnel. Streets too; not seed-plots of buildings amongst which one wanders by paths that serpentine more than the most serpentining serpent.

The idea suddenly occurs to me, perhaps this is Timbuctoo after all. That would explain everything. But it is impossible; the Bosos say we are still twelve days' journey distant from there.

What is this town, then, with its wide, straight roads, its houses of two stories (some with a sketch of a third) built in a style that instantly arrests the eye? I am completely bewildered by an apparition so absolutely unexpected in the midst of a barbarous country. Where did this gathering of unknown life come from? What is this civilisation, sufficiently assured to

HOUSE IN JENNE

possess a manner and style of its own? My thoughts naturally turn to the culture of the Khalifs: the Arabian countries are those nearest to the valley of the Niger, and Islamism is diffused

among them. But logically a creed should be accompanied by its art, and there is nothing Arabic in this style. There is no trace in any of the houses, old or new, of the cupola which is such a

A STREET IN JENNE

characteristic commonplace of Egypt, Syria, and Algeria. These buildings have as little in common with the airy palaces of Cairo and Damascus as they have with the delicate and complicated structures of Cordova, Granada, or Seville. This style is not Byzantine, Roman, nor Greek ; still less is it Gothic or Western. All traces of European civilisation cease between the coast and the Niger.

At last I recall these majestically solid forms; and the memory is wafted to me from the other extremity of Africa. Their prototypes rise upon the banks of another great river, but no life is associated with their image. They are dead cities, or rather cities of the dead; for it is in the lifeless towns of the Pharaohs and their hypogeums, it is in the ruins of ancient Egypt in the valley of the Nile, that I have witnessed this art before.

HOUSE IN JENNE

How came it here across the far-off centuries? How is it it adorns a living town to-day? What is this hitherto unnoticed Egyptian colony?

The key to this enigma must be found, and I interrupted my journey, firmly resolved not to resume it before I had unravelled the mystery. I succeeded in fathoming the riddle by means of long talks with the chiefs, notabilities, and marabuts (learned men and Mussulman priests) of the town. Arabic documents

supplemented oral traditions, and, above all, I had the good fortune to find a complete copy of the *Tarik e' Soudan* (long coveted by Orientalists), the great chronicle of the countries of the Niger. I completed and elucidated many of its pages by

A STREET IN JENNE

means of the narratives transmitted from father to son; and, little by little, the mystery unfolded. In the next chapter I shall show how the beneficent influence of Egypt, mother of all our western civilisation, penetrated the heart of the negro

country; and by what means a reflection of its culture spread and survived unto our day, containing in its afterglow all the glory and vivid charm of the tropical twilight.

CHAPTER VI

THE SONGHOIS

In travelling from the coast the European passes through successive native tribes of Western Africa: Cérères, Oualofs, Khassonkas, Soussons and Bambaras, etc., all more or less thick-lipped, woolly-headed, flat-nosed, and barbarous, and all equally well known to the ethnographer.

But arrived at Jenne the traveller finds himself face to face with an entirely new ethnographical entity, namely, the Songhois. Most Europeans miscall them the Sonrhais, but the natives refuse to recognise the word disfigured in this fashion. During the whole forty years in which the interior of Africa has occupied the attention of the world, the name has only appeared before us once. Among ancient geographers Léon the African alone has mentioned them, and that in a paragraph of — two lines! Among moderns, the famous German traveller Barth mentions them at greater length, but all his remarks are wrongly based, for he reckons the Songhois among the aboriginals of the Sudan, and places their cradle between Tindirma and the Dira, to the south-west of Timbuctoo. Quite other is the tradition of the Songhois themselves. They invariably told me that they did not originate in the countries of the Niger, and when questioned concerning the home of their fathers they all gave the same reply. The right arm of the human docu-

ment was raised, flinging back the numerous white draperies that serve as clothing, and a black hand pointed unhesitatingly in the direction of the purple dawn. It was their unvarying response in Jenne or elsewhere, and it was never the west, where Tindirma and Dira lie, that they indicated, but always the east. Once again was that great law of the migrations of peoples confirmed, which draws the nations from the land of the rising to that of the setting sun.

After the human documents I consulted the written, and among all the historical manuscripts collected in my travels the only one to refer to the origin of the Songhois is the *Tarik*.

It must be attentively read, too, for its most precious indications are very concisely enclosed. 'The first king of the Songhois,' it says, 'was called Dialliaman. His name comes from the Arabian *Dia min al Jemen*, signifying "He is come from Yemen." Dialliaman,' the narrative continues, 'quitted Yemen in company with his brother. They travelled through the country of God until destiny brought them to the land of Kokia.

'Now Kokia was a town of the Songhois people situated on the banks of a river, and was very ancient. It existed in the time of the Pharaohs, and it is said that one of them, during his dispute with Moses, sent thither for the magician whom he opposed to the Prophet.

'The two brothers reached the town in such a terrible state of distress that their appearance was scarcely human; their skins were cracked by the heat and dust of the desert, and they were almost naked. The inhabitants questioned them concerning the country of their origin, and their names have been forgotten in the surname with which their reply provided them, "Dia min al Jemen"—"Come from Yemen." And Dialliaman the elder settled in Kokia. Now the god of the Songhois was a fish who appeared

to them from the water at certain periods, wearing a golden ring in his nose; and the people gathered together and worshipped the fish, receiving its commands and prohibitions and obeying its oracles.

'Perceiving their error, Dialliaman hid in his heart a resolution to kill the false deity, and God assisted him in his design.

'One day he pierced the fish with a lance in the presence of the people and killed it. Then the people proclaimed Dialliaman king.'

We thus learn that the Songhois possessed, at a time which we will determine later, a very ancient town called Kokia that was situated near a river. Now where was this town? Barth sought for it on his journey from Lake Chad to the Niger, and placed it upon the banks of the Eastern Niger, though he would assuredly never have found it there.

We will now appeal to oral tradition. With the *Tarik* in my hand I questioned the Songhois concerning the whereabouts of this city of Kokia. 'The city of Kokia was far, very far away in the east, beyond Gao,' was their unanimous reply; and upon two occasions the marabuts added, 'It was a town in the country of Misr.' Now in the Sudan the country of Misr means Egypt, the valley of the Nile, and the name comes from Misra, signifying Cairo.

What river do we find in the map east of Gao? None, large or small, but the Nile; and it is in Egypt alone that Kokia, 'situated near a great river,' could have existed. Moreover, this will explain why the author said, to indicate the great antiquity of the town, 'it already existed in the time of the Pharaohs,' and that 'one of them sent thither for magicians to defeat Moses.' It would probably be a neighbouring and vassal country to which they would apply for them.

Again, Yemen is not far from the valley of the Nile, and the journey of Dialliaman from there to Kokia[1] is quite plausible. The passage of the desert that separates the Nile from the Red Sea would amply explain the condition in which he is depicted to have arrived.

It now remains to be proved at what period and in what

HOUSES IN JENNE

manner the Songhois passed from the shores of the Nile to those of the Niger. The reconstruction of their exodus is, unfortunately, not so simple as the demonstration of their origin, but the following version seems to be the most probable.

[1] It would probably be necessary, in order to identify Kokia with a town of the Nile valley, to find one built upon an island like the two principal Songhois towns, Jenne and Gao. The *Tarik* mentions a town of the same name existing in the sixteenth century south of Gao, but it can have no connection with the Kokia at present under discussion. The name was probably given to it by the Songhois in memory of their first home; if indeed the town really had this name, and it is not an error of the copyists.

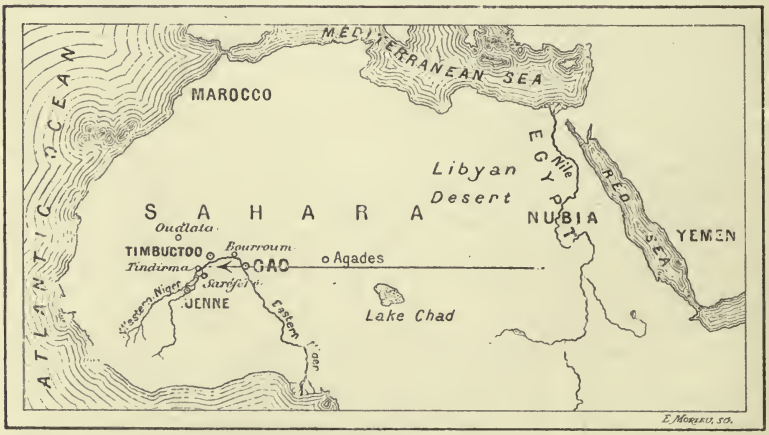
The emigrations must have begun towards the middle of the seventh century, for Jenne was founded one hundred and fifty years after the Hegira (about 765 of our era), and Jenne is the extreme western point of their invasion. From a hundred to a hundred and twenty years would be a sufficient length of time to include the years of wandering and those of settlement and occupation in the Songhoi countries.

The tranquillity of Egypt (which had lasted since the Roman conquest) was rudely disturbed in the seventh century by the lieutenants of the first Khalifs; and the country received a shock that would fully justify such an exodus. The conquerors were dazzled by the richness of these territories, as the letter sent by Amru to the Khalif Omar amply proves. It was a magnificent quarry to the starveling Arab, and the distress of the vanquished must have been in proportion to the enthusiasm of the conquerors. The Lower, Upper, and Middle Egypts were all overrun towards the year 640. Possibly the Songhois suffered more than others from this invasion. Perhaps they refused to receive Islamism. My learned friends, the marabuts, being the official representatives of Mohammedanism, would naturally not have admitted this reason, and the historical manuscripts are dumb upon the subject. Their compilers of three centuries ago were likewise marabuts, and the silence of both is very likely to have been actuated by the same motive. In any case, the habitual methods of the conquering Arabs, their brutality and cupidity, would in themselves sufficiently account for the flight of a people as peaceful and industrious as the Songhois have remained to this day.

Was Dialliaman the promoter and leader of this emigration? The character would harmonise with the picture the *Tarik* has drawn of the adventurer who raised himself to the throne of a country he had entered naked and hungry. His native land was

Yemen, the recent birthplace and centre of the Mohammedan religion. He may have quarrelled with the early disciples of the Prophet, or he may have quitted Arabia in order to escape the violence of their propaganda. Finding himself once more face to face with the fanatics in the country of his adoption, he would naturally resolve upon a new exile to more remote countries, and would depart, accompanied not merely by his brother, but leading a whole people with him.

However that may be, Dialliaman, the intrepid traveller and adventurer that the chronicle shows him to be—Dialliaman, the true Arab who changes his country as easily as his coat,—was in every way fitted to be the leader of a people driven by cruel conquest to seek a new home in a far-off land. The route taken



MAP OF THE SONGHOI EMIGRATION

by the emigrants, keeping south of the Libyan desert, passing by Agades and the north of Lake Chad, would meet the Niger somewhere near Gao. They would naturally follow the outskirts of the desert, as the line of less dense population would be that least likely to impede their progress. In this manner they would

reach the Niger, in spite of the enormous tract of land to be covered, in a comparatively short time. Several details favour this theory. A language similar to that of the Songhois is spoken at Agades, the people bordering the desert between the Chad and the Niger are also Songhoi; and there is no doubt that many more analogous ethnographical and linguistic traits will be found to exist when the countries lying between Lake Chad and the Nile are better known.

Finally, in the country of Bourrousu, near the city of Gao,[1] local tradition preserves the arrival in these parts of an Egyptian Pharaoh, who is probably none other than Dialliaman, or the leader of the Songhoi emigration.

Before tracing the development of this new country of the Songhois, I will enforce the arguments in favour of their Egyptian origin by others no less decisive. The great name of Barth, with whom I am in opposition, seems to compel this digression.

The narratives of the famous traveller serve to confirm these very suppositions, for he is continually finding Egyptian traces in the Songhoi countries and in their countries alone. He observes, in fact, that 'the Songhois seemed to have received their civilisation from Egypt and to have maintained very close relations with her, as many very interesting details show.' After that, what would not his conclusions have been if he had visited Jenne itself and seen the character of her architecture; or if he had gained his facts from the intelligence and science of the Songhois themselves instead of relying upon the information of the Kountas, his hosts at Timbuctoo, who were strangers of comparatively recent date in the country?

He recognised the influence of Egypt, but not in its direct

[1] Gao is also called Kou-Kou, Gogo, Garo, and Gago.

relation, and he believed its civilisation had been received through the medium of the Mohammedan religion! Now, at the date of the appearance of Islamism in the Sudan (which was towards the eleventh century) the civilisation of the Pharaohs had been dethroned for nearly four hundred years by that of the Khalifs. It is hardly possible that the apostles of a new and essentially exclusive cult would have imported and established the manners of ancient Egypt in preference to those of contemporary and Arabian Egypt, which was at that time at the height of its prosperity. It follows therefore that the direct relation with Egypt must have been instituted prior to the appearance of Islamism. The strength of the connection, in spite of the enormous distance which separates the valley of the Nile from that of the Niger, plainly indicates a direct relation. The current that flowed so persistently and strongly between Egypt and the Sudan up to the sixteenth century represents something more than a merely commercial interest; it reveals the route of an exodus. The influence and commerce of Morocco and Algeria in the Sudan (countries comparatively near) were for a long time overpowered by distant Egypt. We find undeniable proofs of this among the ancient geographers. Ibn Batouta, a Moor, who visited the countries of the Niger in 1352, relates that at Oualata 'the greater part of the inhabitants wore the beautiful costumes of Egypt.' Now Oualata is only two months' journey distant from Morocco, while the valley of the Nile is at a distance of at least eight months. Again, to destroy the powerful and traditional bias of Egypt towards the Niger and establish the preponderance of the northern countries of Africa would require no less than a Moorish occupation in 1592.

The Songhois themselves furnish further proof that they were originally strangers in the country. Their speech is totally

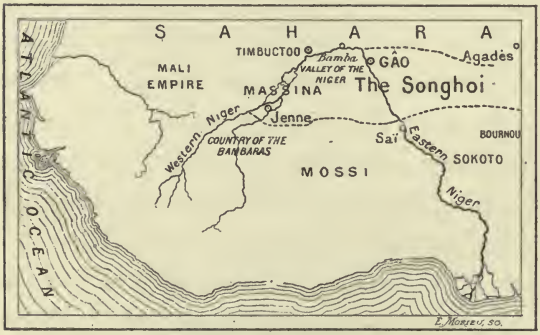
different from the numerous Sudanese dialects, and its roots are those of the languages of the Nile. Moreover, their physical type owns nothing in common with that of the West African negro. In the most mixed group of negroes a Songhois may be identified at the first glance; his skin is as black as theirs, certainly, but nothing in his mask conforms to their well-known characteristics. The nose of the Songhois is straight and long, pointed rather than flat; the lips are comparatively thin, and the mouth wide rather than prominent and broad; while the eyes are deeply set and straight in their orbit. A cursory glance shows that the profile resembles that of the European, and one is struck by the remarkable intelligence of their physiognomy and expression. In addition, they are tall, well-made, and slender.

These peculiarities are still more noticeable among children between six and ten years of age. Their skins are less profoundly black than are those of other infant negroes, and the regularity of their features is even more remarkable than in the adult. Many a time I have been arrested by the sight of a group of children in Jenne and charmed by their rare beauty. They seemed to be deeply bronzed children of the race of Shem rather than of Ham. In short, the Songhois recalls the Nubian rather than the West African negro, and I have studied both at leisure. Ethnography, then, assists us in determining the point of departure of the emigration from the valley of the Nile.

It is to the south of the island of Philæ that we find a similar race, and there also has ancient Egypt left indelible traces. On the left bank of the river she has set up a magnificent series of her most characteristic monuments, and it is small wonder that its inhabitants should be so strongly imbued with them that they preserved the vision to the furthest point of their wanderings.

This point was Gao, as we have already seen. Quitting a country of such numerous waters as Nubia, the emigrants would naturally, before settling, seek a situation that would recall the land of their birth in its external conformation; less from pious memories, perhaps (patriotism is always the latest virtue acquired by a race), than from a desire to continue to live according to their customs and special aptitudes. For a great distance their route would appear singularly unpropitious, for much sand and little water was not what they wanted, and they would not settle in any quantities between the Nile and the Niger.

But at Gao they would find a river which would recall the shores they had left, and whose rise and fall fertilised the country in the same manner. Here they could resume their accustomed methods of labour and cultivation; and, like Barth, they would doubtless be charmed by the beautiful vegetation, containing the date, tamarind, and sycamore trees of their mother-country. And so they fixed their capital at Gao, where they could think for the first time of definite repose, and where their hope of a new home was realised. Half the valley of the Niger they made their own, finding only a feeble and patient aboriginal population there, which has almost disappeared to-day. These people, the Habais, are so timid that they arm themselves with bows and arrows to work in fields which are surrounded by their own villages, and then prefer running away to using their



THE EARLY SONGHOI EMPIRE

weapons. Occupation was therefore an easy matter to the Songhois. They founded Jenne, their most western territory, in 765, and made it the market of their empire. We may conclude their dominion to have attained its normal and present boundaries towards the end of the eighth century. These limits comprise the countries from the east of Gao to Lake Chad, and that portion of the valley of the Niger below Jenne and Say. The Sahara bounds them in the north, the empire of the Mali in the west, and the countries of the Bambaras, the Mossi, and the Sokoti in the south; while the vague regions between Agades and Lake Chad limit them in the east.

We will now take a rapid survey of the history of the Songhois and the considerable place their empire held in the Sudan during a period of nearly a thousand years. It comprised three dynasties, the Dia, the Sunni, and the Askia, and was not without its hours of glory.

The prefix of the Dia was borrowed from Dialliaman, but the Sudanese annals are silent concerning their employment of the six hundred years that contained their reigns (700 to 1335); and we only know that they numbered thirty in all.[1]

[1] A record of their names is immaterial, but I append it, thinking to please the orientalists, who will thus be enabled to read them for the first time as they are pronounced by the Songhois.

Dialliaman's successors were: Dia Arkaï, Dia Atkaï, Dia Akkaï, Dia Akkou, Dia Alfaï, Dia Biagoumaï, Dia Bi, Dia Kira, Dia Aum Karawaï, Dia Aum Sumaïam, Dia Aum Danka, Dia Kiobogo, Dia Koukouraï, Dia Kenken; these were idolaters. The sixteenth king, reigning towards the year 1000 of our era, was converted to Islamism in 1010, and since then all the Songhoi princes have been Mussulmans. The list of names continues without incident up to Dia Soboï: Dia Koussaï Daria, Dia Hin Koronou Goudam, Dia Bia Koni Kimi, Dia Binta Say, Dia Bia Kaïna Kamba, Dia Kaïna Siniobo, Dia Tip, Dialliaman Diago, Dia Ali Korr, Dia Berr Faloco, *Dia Siboï*, Dia Dourou, Dia Kabaro, Dia Bissi Baro, Dia Bada.

In the reign of Dia Soboï the Songhoi kingdom experienced its first crisis, becoming the vassal of its neighbour of the west, the Mali empire, then at the height of its glory. In addition to this an army of the Mossi crossed the valley to pillage Timbuctoo, and succeeded in separating Jenne from the main body of the empire (1329).

Dia Soboï's two sons, Ali Kolon and Suliman Naré, were taken to the court of Konkour-Moussa. 'For it was, and is still, the custom in the Sudan for a monarch to be served by the children of his vassals,' says the *Tarik*. 'Some were permitted to return to their native countries after a certain time, but others lived in bondage to the end of their days.' The young Songhoi princes were detained for a long period at the court of Konkour-Moussa, but Ali Kolon travelled through the kingdom of the Mali from time to time under the pretext of increasing its revenues and augmenting its commerce. He was an intelligent youth, full of prudence, reflection, and enlightenment. By prolonging each journey a little further he learned to know the roads of the country, and, above all, those leading towards Songhoi. At last he determined in his heart to return to his native land, and for this purpose he collected stores of arms and provisions, which he concealed along the route he intended to take. Having confided his plan to his brother, they began to train their horses, feeding them well and accustoming them to endure great fatigue. One day they took their departure. When the news of their flight came to the king's ears he commanded them to be pursued and killed; but although they were overtaken, they defended themselves so well that they were enabled to reach the country of the Songhois.

Ali Kolon was proclaimed king and given the name of 'Sunni, the Liberator.'

Such is the history of the founder of the second dynasty, which lasted from 1355 to 1492, and counted eighteen kings.[1]

Freed by Ali Kolon from the dominion of the Mali, the Songhois resumed the peaceable existence they seemed to have led in the preceding centuries.

The history of the Songhois takes a wider range with Sunni Ali (1464 to 1493). They now overflow their early boundaries

JENNE: A CORNER OF THE TOWN

and develop an empire of an extent never before witnessed in western Africa.

[1] Sunni Alikolon, Sunni Suliman Naré, Sunni Ibrahim Kobia, Sunni Osman Kanava, Sunni Barkaïna Ankabi, Sunni Moussa, Sunni Boukari Dianka, Sunni Boukar Dalla Bougoumba, Sunni Marikin, Sunni Mohammed Daon, Sunni Mohammed Kokia, Sunni Mohammed Barro, Sunni Maré Kollighimon, Sunni Maré Arcouna, Sunni Maré Ardhan, Sunni Suliman Dami, *Sunni Ali*, and Sunni Baro (or Boukari Dao).

Sunni Ali is pre-eminently the soldier; the true negro soldier, who marches from conquest to conquest absorbing all the populations in war, and so absorbed in it himself that he has no time to create and organise his conquests in durable form. He is an old soldier solely occupied with plunder and prisoners and the levying of tribute. Nevertheless, while fighting from east to west during twenty years, he is unconsciously laying the foundations of Songhoi greatness; and the ground being thus prepared, it is not long before an organiser appears who speedily raises the glory and prosperity of the empire to their greatest height.

The career of Ali the Conqueror started in masterly fashion with the conquest of Timbuctoo in 1469. It is somewhat surprising that we have not met this name earlier in the history of the most civilised race of the Sudan; but it was not founded by them, and had never before been counted among their possessions. So complete was the annexation of this famous city that it obtained its supreme grandeur at the precise moment of the Songhois' pre-eminence and declined with their fall.

Jenne, having emancipated itself at the time the Mali and the Mossi were signalising their victories over the last of the Dias, was reduced to obedience after a long siege. Sunni Ali followed up the conquest by attacking the kingdoms of the Mossi and the Hombouri in the centre of the valley, and the Teska Kouboura and Kanta in the east. His chief and most prolonged effort, however, was directed to the west, and concentrated upon the destruction of that Mali empire which had threatened his nation in former days. He subdued nearly the whole of the left bank of the western Niger in this manner, taking little Haoussa (south of Timbuctoo) and Barra (country of Gundam at Lake Debo); destroying Guiddio, a large town on Lake Debo, and fighting against the Senhadiata, the Foulbes,

and the people of Diarka. Returning to Gao from one of these expeditions, he was drowned in a small tributary of the Niger to the south of Timbuctoo.

'He only suffered two reverses,' relates the chronicle, 'one at Duoneo (Douentza?) and the other in Barkou (Bourgoo). He surpassed all the kings, his predecessors, in the numbers and valour of his soldiery. His conquests were many, and his renown extended from the rising to the setting of the sun. If it is the will of God, he will be long spoken of.' The Sudanese writers do, in fact, speak much of Ali the Conqueror, but it is in an unexpected fashion. They heap the most violent epithets upon him and cover him with insults. 'An impious monarch and horrible tyrant,' says one. 'A great oppressor and destroyer of towns, with a hard and unjust heart,' says another. 'A sanguinary despot who slaughtered so many thousands of people that God alone knows their number; he was cruel to the pious and wise, he humiliated them and put them to death,' exclaims a third.

As a matter of fact, he was neither better nor worse than his successors, nor any other Sudanese prince. War has always a particularly brutal and detestable aspect in negro countries. The impartiality of history has no concern with these accumulations of abuse; they merely represent the personal venom of his chroniclers. These were the marabuts who represented literature and the sciences, and were the vicegerents of Islam; it was this latter capacity that dictated their judgments. The incident is interesting for its revelation of the bitter and revengeful feelings which at this period actuated the Mohammedan religion towards outside affairs, even those of the past. It had not attained to great power at this time, and its roots were by no means established in the country. Later on, having acquired a stronger growth,

we shall find it still pursuing this *rôle* and becoming the prime factor in considerable and calamitous events. The great grievance cherished against the conqueror by the marabuts was his very lukewarm religiousness. 'He took great liberties with the faith,' relates the *Tarik*. 'He was wont to delay until nightfall or even till next morning the five prayers which every good Mussulman should say between the rising and the setting of the sun. By degrees he contented himself with merely mentioning their names, and finally he still further simplified these negligences into a single invocation of the name of God, adding, "You all know my prayers, let each take therefrom what concerns him."'

The origin of this scepticism is explained in a little work by El Mouchali, a very learned man of Tlemcen, of whom I shall have occasion to speak later on. He affords us a glimpse of the customs of the period, and shows us the position of Islamism in this country towards the close of the fifteenth century. The higher classes alone, it appears, had rallied to the religion of Mahomet, and that without any great conviction. Idolatry was not prohibited in the court itself, and, seeing that the monarch showed himself scarcely a Mohammedan even in name, his retinue would naturally follow his example. The people openly continued to practise witchcraft and the worship of fetiches, whose temples remained standing even in Gao and Jenne.

'God had directed us,' says another extract, 'towards a country whose inhabitants called themselves Mussulmans, and who were so on the surface. They attended the great service of Friday and the week-day call to the five prayers, but we had little confidence in their marabuts. . . . The manners of this country are very singular. We find a people here who pretend to know the science of occult things, and base this knowledge upon a study of lines traced upon the sand, on the position of the stars, the cries of

JENNE: THE FISHING PORT

birds and their flight, etc. They profess to write charms which will increase profits, excite love, and oppose ruin; which will put their enemies to flight in battle and preserve themselves from the sword and the poison of arrows: and many other things that sorcerers practise in incantations.

'The mother of Sunni Ali came from the country of Farou (Sokato), a nation of infidels who adored images of wood and stone. They had faith in these idols and consulted them. When good or evil befell them, they ascribed it to the idols being favourable or unfavourable. The worship of these false gods is directed by priests, who are guided in their turn by soothsayers and magicians who give consultations.

'Sunni Ali passed his youth and grew to manhood there, and his mind was naturally influenced by these idolatries and customs. Nevertheless, he decided in favour of Mohammedanism when he became king, although its usages were barely known to him. He would add after the name of the Prophet, Let him be praised: and after the holy name of Allah he would say, May the prayer and salvation of God be with him. But the reverse is what he should have said. For a time he fasted during the month of Ramadan, and made offerings and sacrifices in the mosques; but after a while he returned to idols and soothsayers, he sought guidance in practices of witchcraft, and honoured trees and stones with sacrifices and offerings, asking of them the fulfilment of his desires.

'At last, neither he nor his companions were ever seen (even on Friday) in the cathedral mosque, or in any of the others, and from fear of him the thousands of men and women dwelling in his house neither fasted nor prayed during Ramadan. He did not know the Fatiha (the first sûra) by heart, nor any other sûra of the Koran. Habitually careless in his prayers, he neither bowed nor pro-

strated himself during their recitation. He had relations with women that are unrecognised by marriage, or any other contract permitted by Islamism. If a woman pleased him he took her to his palace regardless of her husband or her family. He also allowed Mussulmans to be pillaged and slain, and he put to death many theologians and learned men of law.'

The last clause is true, but Mouchali omits to add that Sunni Ali only ill-treated certain marabuts, and those, not because they were Mussulmans and priests, but because they had interfered in politics and conspired against him on account of his scepticism. In spite of his enemies among the caste, he invariably honoured the holy men who made religion and piety alone their study; 'always keeping an accurate record of their numbers,' says the *Tarik*, 'he paid homage to their merits and made them large presents.' This generosity shows the tolerant spirit which is characteristic of the Songhoi people.

I will only dwell upon one more side of his character, the violence and frenzy of his wrath. It flamed into a fury upon the least provocation, and in its transport he would order the death of any one of his retinue, even of the one who was useful and devoted to him and whom he most cherished. The excess of his rage was only equalled by the promptness of his remorse. His servants were aware of this, and, when the condemned person was one whom Sunni Ali would afterwards regret, they would merely keep him out of sight until the moment of repentance arrived. The king would be filled with joy upon these occasions to find that the fulfilment of his commands had been delayed.

Among those whose existence was often separated from Paradise by a mere thread was Mohammed ben Abou Bakr, a native of Touroud. It is not easy to establish the exact

number of times he was condemned to death, but he was Sunni's right hand, his best general and his wisest minister. 'A great heart, gifted with a great generosity which God had given him by nature.'

The death of Sunni Ali gave this man food for reflection.

A HOUSE IN JENNE

He naturally did not care to continue the same precarious existence under the son, Sunni Barro, which he had enjoyed under the father. His personal influence being considerable, he determined to seize the crown.

'As soon as his preparations were complete, therefore, he placed himself at the head of his partisans and attacked Sunni Barro at Dangha. His army was defeated and he was obliged to take refuge in Gao. Reassembling his forces, however, the adventurer tried his fortunes a second time. The struggle which ensued was a long and desperate one, both armies being all but annihilated, but Sunni Barro was finally obliged to fly from the

country never to return to it, and Mohammed ben Abou Bakr ascended the throne in 1494.

The news being announced to the daughters of Sunni Ali, they exclaimed 'Askia!' which signifies 'It is not he,' or 'Usurper.' This being repeated to him, Mohammed ordained that no other surname should be given him, and Askia Mohammed he accordingly became.

We have thus arrived at the third and last Songhoi dynasty, which reigned from 1494 to 1591.

Askia Mohammed showed considerable political ability from the very moment of his accession. He adopted an entirely new attitude towards religion, and a few months after his accession there was not a more devout Mussulman throughout all Songhois than the late friend and companion of the 'miserable infidel.' He insisted that Islamism should be held in honour throughout the country, and instead of the former soothsayers his retinue now consisted of marabuts. He showered gifts upon them and took their advice in everything.

They, in return, hastened to legitimise his usurpation, authorised him to take possession of the Conqueror's treasure, and assisted him in despoiling the dignitaries of the former's rule. They demonstrated in council that Sunni Ali had been the most abominable of infidels, and, in consequence, the war undertaken by Askia against his descendant was a necessary war, an excellent war—in short, a holy war.

The pious biographers exult over him, they represent him as 'a brilliant light shining after great darkness; a saviour who drew the servants of God from idolatry and the country from ruin. The Defender of the Faithful, who scattered joy, gifts, and alms around him.'

As soon as his authority was well established he placed the reins of government in the hands of his brother Omar, and proceeded to still further legitimise himself by a gorgeous pilgrimage to Mecca and Cairo (1497).

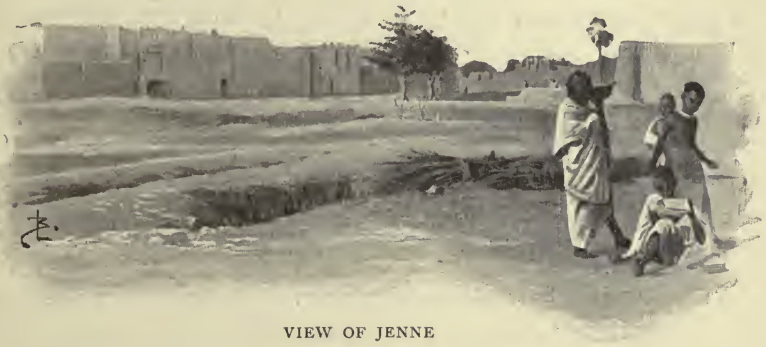
'He made a pilgrimage to the house of God, accompanied by a thousand foot-soldiers and five hundred horse, and carrying with him three hundred thousand mitkals of gold from the treasure of Sunni Ali. He scattered this treasure in the holy places, at the tomb of the Prophet in Medina, and at the sacred mosque at Mecca. In the latter town he bought gardens and established a charitable institute for the people of the Sudan. This place is well known in Mecca, and cost five thousand mitkals.

'He rendered homage to the Khalif Abassid Motewekkel in Egypt, praying to be made his deputy in the Sudan in general and in Songhois in particular. The Abassid consented, requiring the king of Songhois to abdicate for three days and to place the power in his hands. On the fourth day Motewekkel solemnly proclaimed Askia Mohammed the representative of the sultan in the Sudan. He accompanied this by placing a green fez and white turban upon his head and returning him his sabre.'

This pilgrimage had another and still more important effect upon his reign and his people, for he assiduously entertained the theologians and learned men of Cairo while there. He evinced a great interest in many subjects, and displayed much anxiety to receive their counsel upon the best and most enlightened manner of life and government. He deferred especially to Essoyouti, a scholar whose name is celebrated in Arabian literature to this day. Askia opened a correspondence with him on his return to Songhois, and always submitted his most important reforms to the savant, never neglecting to follow his advice concerning them. It was at Cairo, undoubtedly, that he acquired those notions of

government which his organising genius applied to the erection of a fabric so solid and durable that it lasted to the end of his dynasty. Thus once again we find Egypt exercising a civilising influence upon the Sudan.

Having won the sonorous title of 'Emir Askia el Hadj (the pilgrim) Mohamman' by this long voyage, he earned, as the immediate result of it, the more valuable title of Askia the Great. He resumed the reins of government on his return, making his brother Omar his generalissimo. The position of neither was



VIEW OF JENNE

an easy one, for Sunni Ali's unorganised conquests had to be consolidated—almost, in fact, renewed; and hardly a year of his reign is unmarked by some expedition.

The first was against the Mossi in 1449. This kingdom, situated to the south of Songhois, had pursued a very turbulent and aggressive policy, and advancing its boundaries throughout the north of the valley (Gourma) had penetrated as far as Oualata. The *Tarik* describes their suppression by Askia in the following words :—

'The Emir sent an ambassador to the king of Mossi demanding his conversion to Islamism. The monarch replied, saying he

must take counsel with his ancestors who were in the other world; and for this purpose he retired to the temple of his idols, accompanied by his court and the ambassador, the latter being curious to see how the dead were communicated with.

'After the performance of the usual ceremonies of these heathen, an old man appeared, before whom they prostrated themselves, delivering the Emir's message. "I will never consent to your doing this thing," was the reply. "You must fight against the Songhois until you have exterminated either the enemy or yourselves." Then said the king to the ambassador, "Return to your master and say to him that nothing but war can be between him and me." When all the people had quitted the temple, the ambassador spoke to the being who had appeared in the form of an old man, and said, "In the name of the all-powerful God, what art thou?" "I am Satan," was the response, "and I have led these people astray that they might perish in their infidelity." The ambassador related all that had passed to the Emir, and a holy war was declared. The arms of Askia were victorious, and he destroyed their fields and villages, making men, women, and children his prisoners, and compelling them to be converted.'

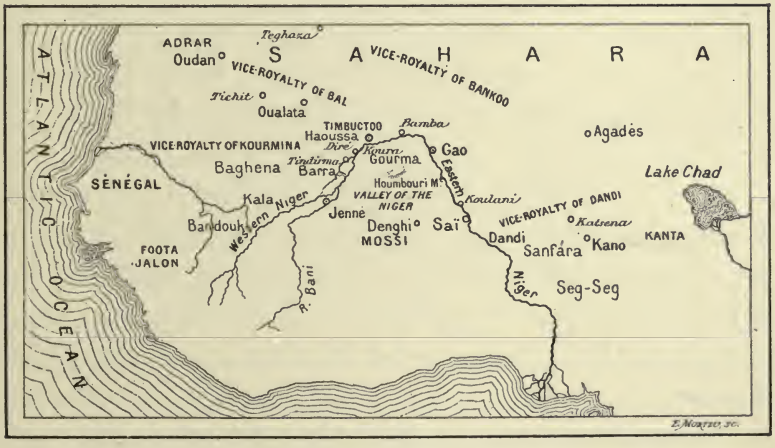
After the south, the west; and it now became necessary to destroy the kingdom of the Mali, a twelve years' task (1501-1513). Zalna, the capital, was taken, and so thoroughly destroyed that it is now impossible to identify the situation of this once important town. This success was followed up by a savage war upon the provinces, the towns, and the races of the Mali.

The struggle was a desperate one on both sides, and the final supremacy was dearly bought, as the following anecdote will show: 'The Emir lost such great quantities of his best soldiers in Mali that his brother Omar wept, saying, "The Songhois will be exter-

minated." But Askia replied, "On the contrary, these conquered nations will make our lives easier, for they will become a part of us, and will assist us in our enterprises." And in this manner he drove the sadness out of his brother's mind.'

Having thus reduced the west, Askia turned his attention to the east, and reorganised that portion of his empire lying in the neighbourhood of Lake Chad (1514-1519). Agades had asserted its independence at the instigation of the Berbers, and he was obliged to reconquer it, as Sunni Ali had formerly subdued Jenne. He also subjugated the kingdoms of Katsina, Kano, Zegzey, and Sanfara.

His empire now extended from the salt-mines of Thegazza in



THE SONGHOI ORGANISATION

the north to Bandouk, or the country of Bammaku, in the south, and from Lake Chad in the east to the shores of the Atlantic in the west. 'It was a six-months' journey to cross this formidable empire,' says a contemporary.

And yet the reign of Askia the Great is not so remarkable

for its conquests as for the wise method of government he established in the country, and the pains he took to closely incorporate the new territories with the Songhoi empire.

Unlike Sunni Ali, he was not content with simply demanding tribute, but destroyed all the old systems, and reconstructed them, giving their administration into the hands of his own functionaries. Thus the empire was not merely temporarily but actually enlarged, and that for a prolonged period. It is said that his will was as well carried out in the furthest extremities of his kingdom as in Songhois, or even in the royal palace itself.

Four viceroys were created, who controlled the governors of the provinces, military chiefs, judges, and the collection of taxes. The first was the viceroyalty of Dandi (with a capital of the same name), which commanded Lake Chad; the second, that of Bankou, governed the country between Timbuctoo and Gao in the north; the third was the viceroyalty of Bal or Balma, and administered the whole of the north-west from Timbuctoo and Gambara to Thegazza, and included the control of the king of the Touaregs; whilst the fourth and most important was that of Kourmina (capital Tindirma) and comprised the government of Baghena (Mali), Barra (capital Sâ), Dirma (capital Dira), and Massina.

The great governments of Bandouk, Kala (Sansanding), and Hombouri had no viceroy.

The highest officers of state were either chosen from the royal family or married to its princesses, as were the principal military chiefs and marabuts.

The administration thus formed a dynastic aristocracy of the greatest importance to national unity.

Another innovation, which assisted Askia to effect his numerous

conquests and ensure the peace and prosperity of the country, was the creation of a standing army.

Sunni Ali had completely disorganised the Songhois by compelling all the available population to prosecute his wars. Askia, on the other hand, 'divided his people into subjects and soldiers.' It was this trained soldiery that made the conquest of the improvised and inexperienced bands of his enemies so easy. He formed a large body of cavalry, armed with spears and mounted on powerful horses brought from barbarous states. The bellicose Touaregs were also formed into auxiliary squadrons.

The numerous infantry were armed with bows and poisoned arrows; the great chiefs went to battle in cuirasses and iron helmets, while the less important had shields only. When the new territories had so greatly increased that the Songhois soldiers no longer sufficed to maintain them, Askia recruited new troops from the conquered populations, thus fulfilling the reassuring prospects with which he had comforted Omar during the sanguinary Mali campaign.

The division of the population into civil and military classes permitted the productive and trading elements to pursue their occupations undisturbed. Commerce developed amazingly, its transactions being favoured and assisted by excellent measures guaranteeing regularity and honesty. A unification of weights and measures was decreed, and all falsifications were severely punished, every market of importance being placed under the surveillance of an inspector. Jenne was the centre of the internal commerce, Timbuctoo monopolised relations with the west and north-west (Morocco and Tuat principally), and Gao those with the east and north-east (Egypt and Tripoli).

The Niger constituted the principal commercial route, for the greater part of the transactions were carried on by water. Euro-

pean merchandise penetrated in large quantities to the centre of the black world, and were in such request, that the supply scarcely kept pace with the demand.

In the train of the merchants came the learned strangers who flocked to the Sudan upon hearing that they would be particularly well received. They came from Morocco, Tuat, Algeria, and Cairo. Science and letters received a sudden impetus, and were not long in producing Sudanese writers of the greatest interest; whose manuscripts, in fact, furnish me with all these details, and of whom I shall speak at greater length when we have reached Timbuctoo.

Among his numerous innovations Askia naturally did not neglect religion. It had, after himself, an official and supreme representative (exclusively ecclesiastic) in the person of a Sheik-ul-Islam, whose residence was at Timbuctoo. The king had seen a similar authority side by side with the Khalif Abassid in Egypt; and he adopted this religious institution, together with the attire and manner of living of the Arabian ruler. He formed the etiquette of his court upon that of the Khalif's, keeping himself strictly invisible to the vulgar eye. 'Askia el Hadj did not care to be seen,' reports the *Tarik*, 'and he persuaded his brother Omar to follow his example in this. "Expose not thyself to perish of the evil eye," he said to him.' He compelled the women of the towns to lead the life of the Eastern harem, and forbade that any (married or single) should show themselves unveiled, making his own family set the example. People approaching the king in audience covered their heads with dust: he never spoke directly to assemblies nor to the people, but always dealt with them through the medium of a herald. Upon the occasions of his going out, his cortège was preceded by musicians, drums, and trumpets, and he rode in solitary state,

with his suite at a respectful distance behind. Servants marched surrounding his horse, and holding by turns to his saddle; they were called foot companions, and their head-man was the 'master of the road.' Viceroys had a right to a similar but more modest display. Only one drum was allowed to precede them, and their musicians were to keep silence when in sight of a town in which the king was residing. In short, the royal negro, like other white usurpers, made the greater parade of the power and state of majesty the less right he had to it. But all this is insignificant in view of the really great qualities possessed by this ruler of the Songhois.

A wonderful impulse was imparted to this country in the sixteenth century, and a marvellous civilisation appeared in the very heart of the black continent. This civilisation was not imposed by circumstances and force, as is so often the case, even in our own countries, but was spontaneously desired, evoked, and propagated by a man of the negro races. Unfortunately, its fairest promises were never fulfilled, owing, not so much to the native successors, as to the civilised (some say white) peoples who ruthlessly destroyed all this good seed, and caused the tares of barbarism to sprout anew.

After thirty-five years of responsibilities nobly discharged, the faculties of Askia the Great began to decline. His numerous sons (he had a hundred) now longed to be quit of him, and finally the eldest, Askia Moussa, revolted and deposed his father at Gao, 1529.

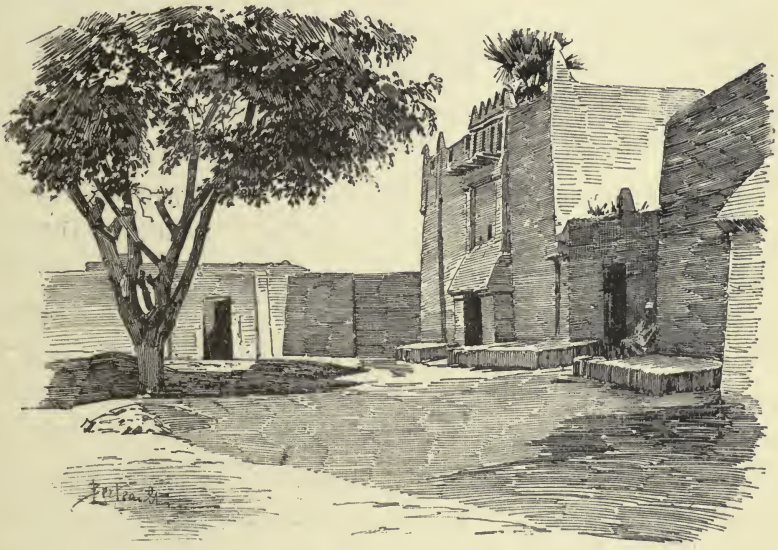
All that Moussa and his successors were called upon to do was to live in the solid edifice erected by the founder of their dynasty. I will only relate, therefore, those particulars of their reigns which will enable us to form some idea of the character, manners, and customs of these people at this time.

Moussa's first care was to moderate the ambition of his brothers by having a certain number of them put to death. Some offered armed resistance, notably Bala, his father's favourite son. 'Being forced to give himself up, Bala replied to the intercession of the king's son on his behalf, "My child, it is necessary that I should die; for these three things I would never consent to do—give Moussa the title of Askia, throw dust upon my head in his presence, nor ride behind him in processions." Moussa commanded an exceedingly deep hole to be dug, in which Bala and one of his cousins were placed; it was then filled with water, and the two young men were drowned.' These singular family manners furnished the restored and consolidated Islam with an occasion to, very laudably and courageously, assert its authority. The Sheik-ul-Islam interposed as mediator between Moussa and his brothers, and vindicated his position in the following manner. He took his place beside Moussa, turning his face away from him. 'Dost thou dare to turn thy back upon me?' asked Moussa; and the Sheik replied, 'I cannot look upon the face of him that has deposed the Emir of the true believers.' On another occasion a mere marabut delivered himself of the following: 'We enjoyed prosperity and repose in the reign of thy father, the happy, the good; and we made prayers that God might accord him victory and a long life. We asked ourselves, Has he a son who shall be the hope of Islam? and we answered, Yes; so we offered prayers for thee as well as for thy father. Thou hast deceived our hopes, but we do not cease our prayers, only instead of invoking God in thy favour we pray against thee.'

Finding themselves in the process of decimation, the brothers of Moussa assassinated him, and a nephew of Askia the Great reigned under the title of Askia Bankouri (1533). He, also, made haste to remove a certain number of his uncle's sons, and even

showed an increased cruelty towards the great and unhappy old man himself. Moussa had at least left Askia to live quietly in the royal palace of Gao, but Bankouri relegated him to the little island of Kankaka, to the west of that town, 'where the frogs leaped around him,' says the chronicle.

Bankouri appears to have wielded the power with great



A CORNER IN JENNE

magnificence. His court was brilliant, for he liked to be surrounded by all his dignitaries, who wore gorgeous garments. Music was held in high esteem, and a chorus of singing slaves was established.

He was deposed in 1537 by the viceroy of Dandi, whom he had imprudently threatened, and Askia Ismael was proclaimed king. The motives that decided the latter to accept the crown were as varied as they were remarkable.

'I accepted the honour for three reasons,' he declared: 'to

rescue my father from his distressful condition, to enable my sisters to resume the veil that Bankouri had obliged them to relinquish, and to pacify Yan Mara, one of the hundred hen ostriches who was wont to throw herself into a frenzy whenever she saw Bankouri.'

The *Tarik* does not tell us if Yan Mara recovered her happiness after this, but we learn with pleasure that Askia the Great returned to his palace of Gao, and died in peace there in 1538. Ismael was the first of the Askia to die on his throne (1540), and he was succeeded by his brother, Askia Ishak. He, like his predecessors, had very strong family feelings, and put an end to a good many of his relations. He is reported to have destroyed one of them by means of a spell. 'Arbinda, his sister's son, caused him much anxiety. He was a remarkable man, of such astonishing valour, that he was greatly desired as a successor to Ishak. The latter confided his fears to a man versed in the occult sciences, and begged his assistance. The magician filled a vase with water and pronounced several invocations, after which he called 'Arbinda! Arbinda! come hither!' Then there rose out of the water a puppet greatly resembling Arbinda, and the magician put chains upon its feet and struck it with a spear, saying, 'Go!' and the puppet disappeared. Soon afterwards it was found that Arbinda had died at the moment the image was struck by the magician.

The four last Askias to reign over the whole empire were Askia Daoud, 1549-1581; Askia El Hadj II., 1581-1586; Askia Mohamman Ban, 1586-1587; and Askia Ishak II., 1587-1591. These, like their predecessors, undertook a certain number of expeditions (almost all fortunate ones), not so much to make new conquests as to preserve the old ones. They had no need to enlarge their magnificent heritage, as we can well understand, but

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they did not even make an effort to improve it, nor to encourage the progress instituted by the first of their race. If, on the one hand, they were not guilty of any retrogressive movement, as little can any wise innovation be attributed to them.

Fratricidal struggles, family ferocities, and a perpetual fear of rivalry, were their dominant pre-occupations, always including debauch. 'They changed the fear of God into infidelities. Abandoned to the practice of forbidden things, they covered themselves with sin in the open day. They drank intoxicating liquids, and committed acts contrary to nature. Adultery was their most common vice; it would seem that they did not even consider it reprehensible, and neither rank nor services were any obstacle to them. Some even committed this sin with their own sisters.'

In spite of receiving no care from its rulers, the powerful machinery created and set in motion by Askia the Great still endured, so well had it been planned and so solidly was it built. For nearly a quarter of a century its prosperity suffered no decrease. The empire was so firmly constructed that it would have lasted intact until the race of Askia had produced a sovereign worthy of its founder and well fitted to continue his work.

But now the invading Moor appears, and the Songhoi empire passes out of sight, to become a Moorish colony, which is to say that the terrible Arabian race is about to accomplish one of its worst pieces of work in the Sudan.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOORS IN THE SUDAN

The prosperity of the Sudan, and its wealth and commerce, were known far and wide in the sixteenth century. Caravans returning along the coasts proclaimed its splendours in their camel loads of gold, ivory, hides, musk, and the spoils of the ostrich. The Portuguese (always the first traders of Europe), endeavoured at this time to enter into relations with these countries of the Niger, whose magnificence had become a proverb. 'As tar cures the gall of a camel, so poverty finds its unfailing remedy in the Sudan,' was the saying of northern Africa.

So many attractions gathered together under one sky could not fail to rouse the attention, and by-and-by the cupidity, of neighbouring territories. Chief among these was naturally that country nearest to the Sudan, Morocco. From the first their avarice assumed a harshly definite character, for the people of Morocco had not, and never did have, any desire to colonise and develop a commerce, nor even to institute a religious propaganda. They looked upon the Sudan in the light of a gold-mine, and their first aspirations, like their ultimate efforts, were concentrated upon the mere drainage of this precious metal. This covetousness of theirs was also the source of a new danger to the Sudan, as it became the means of jeopardising its salt-supply.

The interior of the Sudan lacks this most necessary of

products, and salt represented, and always will represent, their principal article of commerce. It was the true gold of the Sudanese, their most precious commodity, and they obtained it from the mines of Thegazza, which were situated in the heart of the desert. These mines were nearer to Morocco than to the countries of the Niger, but Thegazza, as we have seen, was the property of the Songhois, and possessed its representative Emir.

Hostilities commenced towards the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1545 Mouley Mohammed El Kebir, the sultan of Morocco, sent an embassy to the king of the Songhois, claiming the mines of Thegazza, under the pretext that they were situated on his frontiers. Askia Ishak I. admitted neither the pretext nor the argument, and emphasised his denial of the claim by an army of Touaregs whom he despatched to pillage Draa, a town on the frontiers of Morocco, a plain intimation that he was strong enough to defend his own, and was quite prepared to do so should the sultan be inclined to dispute his rights.

This firm attitude gained a twenty-years respite for the Sudan, and the question was not reopened until a later reign. It then assumed a new form under Mouley Abdallah, who, instead of claiming Thegazza itself, demanded a rent for the use of the mines. The Sudan was under the rule at this time of Askia Daoud, who did not entertain the question of tribute, but sent a very conciliatory message to the sultan, accompanied by a present of ten thousand mitkals of gold (150,000 francs). The sultan was so overcome by the magnificence of this gift that he made no further demands (1547).

The fatal moment approached, however, with the accession of the Sultan El Mansour. A reform, of great importance under the circumstances, had been instituted by his predecessor, who

had greatly increased the efficiency of the army by supplying it with firearms, cannon, etc.

From the beginning of his reign El Mansour had especially occupied himself with the Sudan. He sent an embassy in 1583, ostensibly charged with magnificent gifts, but in reality commissioned to reconnoitre the roads and principal towns of Songhois, and make a study of its army. Askia El Hadj II. received the embassy at Gao, and returned it laden with gifts of still greater splendour than those it had brought. This was fuel to the flames, and, too impatient to waste any time in making preparations, El Mansour set twenty thousand men on the road to Timbuctoo. The route, traversing desert after desert, was a long one, and in no way fitted to accommodate an unexpected army. Hunger and thirst very soon forced the invaders to retreat, and the sultan had to content himself with posting a body of two hundred musketeers at Thegazza. Thereupon the Sudanese abandoned the place and its mines for others recently discovered at Taoudenni, which for the future supplied them with the precious produce.

El Mansour now had more salt than he knew what to do with, but no gold, and the Sudan continued to occupy his thoughts. A new king reigning in Songhois, he resuscitated the ancient pretext of tribute, and demanded a mitkal of gold for every load of salt entering the Sudan. Askia Ishak II. refused point blank, and, by way of expressing his whole thought, accompanied the refusal by a gift of swords and javelins. He should have gone still further, and followed the example of Ishak I. by sending a force of Touaregs to show themselves upon the Moorish frontier. As it was, El Mansour took the initiative.

Having convoked a grand council of his most experienced advisers at Marrakesh, he explained his plans to them in the following words: 'I have resolved to attack the Sudan. It

is an exceedingly rich country, and will furnish us with large taxes, and we shall thus be enabled to give greater importance to the Mohammedan armies.'

The sultan having thus, as a contemporary Moorish historian expresses it, 'emptied his quiver and purged his liver of its bile,' did not find his assembly particularly enthusiastic upon the subject. 'Prince,' they said, 'there is an immense desert between our country and the Sudan, which is devoid of water and vegetation, and so hard to traverse that the very birds lose their way there.' 'If these are all your objections,' replied El Mansour, 'I see no reason why they should hinder my resolution. You speak of dangerous deserts and perilous solitudes. But do we not see, from day to day, feeble merchants, poor in resource, penetrating these regions, and passing through them on foot, on horse or camel, in groups or solitary? Cannot I do what these caravans accomplish? I, who am in every way better equipped than they? The conquest itself will be an easy one, for these Sudanese know neither powder nor cannon, nor are they acquainted with the muskets of terrifying sound. They are only armed with spears and sabres, and what can they avail against us? Why should we make war against the Turk, who gives much trouble and little profit, when the Sudan would be an easy conquest, and is richer than the whole of northern Africa?' The councillors allowed themselves to be persuaded by this eloquence, saying, 'Lord, God has inspired you with the truth, and we have no longer anything to say against it. So true is it that the minds of princes are the princes of minds.'

El Mansour took immense pains to organise an army, not great in numbers, but carefully selected. From among his nomadic soldiers and auxiliaries he chose the bravest and most devoted men, providing them with strong camels and thoroughbred horses.

In this manner he collected an army of three thousand musketeers and a thousand combatants (half cavalry and half foot) with side-arms. The supreme command was intrusted to the Pasha Djonder, with ten subordinate chiefs (or kaids), and the expedition left Morocco towards the end of the year 1590.

It entered the Sudan from the west, near the region of the lakes south of Timbuctoo, and its fortunate arrival on the banks of the Niger was considered in the light of its first victory, and was celebrated by a great festival of rejoicing. It now turned towards Gao, the capital, and when Ishak II. heard of the arrival of the Moors he assembled an army of thirty thousand foot and twelve thousand horse, and opposed them to the invaders. The battle took place in February 1591 at Toundibi, not far from Timbuctoo.

El Mansour had not made a wrong estimate of the perfections of his armament. The Songhois were routed almost without a blow being struck, 'in the twinkling of an eye,' it is said. The sudden shock of smoke, noise, and the hail of balls so terrified them, that many, thinking nothing could preserve them from such miracles, did not even attempt to fly. They were found upon their shields with legs crossed, waiting for the conquerors, and they allowed themselves to be killed without making any movement in self-defence. The Moors pitilessly slew the demoralised crowd, not even sparing those who cried, 'We are Mussulmans; we are your brothers in religion.'

The panic lasted as it had reigned during the battle, and spread throughout the entire country. Ishak, who had gone to battle full of confidence, surrounded by magicians and sorcerers, took to his heels at the beginning of the action, and made no attempt to resist, even in the capital itself. On receiving a command to evacuate it the monarch sought refuge with the crowd,

flying to Bornou in the south-east, without attempting the chance of a second battle.

Djonder entered Gao without striking a blow, and Ishak hastened to make overtures of peace, acquiescing in the demand of annual tribute, and offering a present of a hundred thousand mitkals of gold, and one hundred slaves in addition.

The pasha, judging these terms acceptable, transmitted them to the sultan with a convoy of gold and slaves, and then turned his steps to Timbuctoo, taking it without opposition, and settling there to await the reply of his master.

El Mansour, however, would not hear of limiting himself to his original claims. The success which he had so clearly foreseen intoxicated him. 'He received so much gold-dust, musk, slaves, ebony, and other valuable objects,' says the chronicle, 'that the envious are troubled and all spectators are stupefied. He now pays his functionaries in pure metal of good weight.' From which it would appear that he had not been above falsifying his coinage. 'There were fourteen thousand smiths in his palace employed in making the gold into coins, while other portions of the treasure were converted into necklaces and jewels, and the name of El Dékébi (the Golden) was given to the sultan.'

Great public rejoicings continued at Marrakesh during three days, and deputations came from all parts to offer congratulations. Poets wrote verses to celebrate El Mansour's glory, inviting 'the birds of happiness to sing unceasingly in his honour,' and calling him 'the root of glory to which all attach themselves.' The triumph of the white over the negro race was recorded in the following picturesque language: 'The army of the day hath fallen upon the army of night, and the whiteness of the one hath destroyed the blackness of the other.'

It was not without reason that the Moors exulted over the

conquest. 'They found that the Sudan,' says the *Tarik*, 'rivalled the countries most favoured by God, in the abundance, prosperity, security, and health of all its territories, and all these benefits resulted from the blessed reign of the Emir of the true believers, Askia El Hadj. But from this time everything was altered; security became fear, prosperity was changed into ruin, health into sickness and anguish, and men began to fight and pillage among themselves.

Dissatisfied with the moderation of Djonder, El Mansour removed him from the supreme command and instantly despatched another pasha, named Mahmoud, to the south. He was instructed to pursue Askia Ishak to the death, and make the Sudan a Moorish province. On reaching Timbuctoo, Mahmoud garrisoned it and departed with the army in search of the king of the Songhois. The latter, hearing that his terms were rejected by the sultan, took up arms afresh; but the disaster of Bamba was as complete as that of the first encounter, and Ishak was forced to retreat further into the south.

In these circumstances (already sufficiently critical), the Songhois enfeebled themselves still further by internal dissensions. Half the army proclaimed Askia Kaghou king, and Askia Ishak was too demoralised to make any effort to regain the supremacy. He disappeared from the scene in a manner that, if not heroic, was at least tragic. 'Having resolved to yield the power to his rival, he gathered together the officers of that part of the army which had remained faithful to him, and collecting all the insignia of royalty, they burned them in a place called Tera. The king and his officers then took leave of one another, weeping and begging mutual forgiveness; and this was the last time they saw each other.' Ishak shortly afterwards died, obscure and abandoned, at Gourma (1592).

The pasha now proceeded to a conquest and pacification which have become legendary. The usurper, Askia Kaghou, having given himself up, he and his retinue were crushed (by order of the pasha), by the fall of the house in which they were imprisoned. Eighty-three members of the royal house suffered death in various ways, some being beheaded, while others were drowned or crucified.

Timbuctoo, which had rebelled against the harsh treatment of the garrison, was cruelly punished. Two of its chief personages were mutilated by having their hands and feet cut off, and were then left to die. Many were massacred, and all the learned men, those marabuts who had been the pride of the great city, were imprisoned or taken to Morocco, from whence very few returned.

With the fall of the Songhois many of their conquered provinces revolted, pillaging and destroying in the south and east of the empire. Half the kingdom fell a prey to anarchy. Foulbes, Touaregs and Bambarras distinguished themselves in this capacity. Moorish columns, aided by the kaids, overran Baghena, Diarka, Jenne, and the countries of the Upper Niger, ravaging as they went.

At the same time, the pasha Mahmoud was similarly occupied in the other extremity of the kingdom, in Houmbouri and Dandi, where a few Songhois had taken refuge with Askia Noé.

In 1595 the conquest was complete, and the Moors, realising that the Niger was the key to the Sudan, fortified its course from east to west, garrisoning Jenne, Tindirma, Timbuctoo, Bamba, Gao, and Koulani in the extreme south-east. Each of these forts was placed under the command of a kaid.

The governor of the colony took the title of pasha. He was nominated by the sultan, sent from Morocco, and exercised the civil power only. The chief command of the troops devolved upon a kaid, and there was also a hakim, or kahia, who filled the offices

of treasurer and prime minister. The sultan further instituted two emirs, who were comptrollers for the crown, and resided, the one at Timbuctoo, and the other at Jenne. These two towns, with Gao, were the great centres of occupation, Jenne and Gao finally ceding the position of capital to Timbuctoo. The latter town, situated on the high-road to Morocco, was the residence of the governor; the greater part of the troops were quartered in it, while reinforcements arrived at and expeditions started from there.

This represents the Moorish side of the colony, but it still preserved a native one. Mahmoud, after establishing the prestige of the conquerors by the cruelties we have just witnessed, soon realised that the administration of the country would be impossible if he destroyed the whole of its organisation. Some members of the royal family had joined him since the invasion, and he distinguished one among them, Askia Soleiman, by making him king under his tutelage, and giving him a residence at Timbuctoo. Askia the Great's distribution of the country into viceroyalties and governments was preserved, the pasha retaining the nomination to these posts. Touaregs, Foulbes, Songhois, and feudatories were recruited to form auxiliary troops, and when the musketeers departed on an expedition they were accompanied by native contingents, commanded by their king, or viceroy, under the orders of the kaid.

For twenty years the constitution worked pretty well; then, in consequence of events that occurred at Morocco, disintegration set in. El Mansour died from poisoning in 1604. His successors, occupied with palace intrigues and intestinal struggles, took no further heed of the Sudan than to look for its convoys of gold, and interested themselves little, if at all, in what went on there.

In 1613 the governor of the Sudan was no longer nominated

from Morocco, but was chosen by the troops from among their kaids. Up to now the soldiers had been periodically reinforced. In 1605 twenty-three thousand Moors had been sent to the Niger, but these supplies gradually dwindled, and ceased altogether in 1620. The sultan only manifested his care and attention when some embezzlement was brought to his notice, or when the transports of gold did not equal his expectations; and on these occasions he would give orders to hang and drown a certain number of persons interested. For the rest, he left the colony to disentangle its affairs as it best could, which it occasionally accomplished by tying them into tighter knots than before. The kaids deposed one another and disputed the title of pasha among themselves, settling their rivalries by force of arms. The pasha of to-day beheaded or imprisoned the pasha of yesterday. In a period of thirty years, 1620 to 1650, twenty governors may be counted. Some enjoyed the power for a mere six or eight months, and later on their reigns are to be counted by weeks and days, some by a day only, and occasionally there was no pasha at all. In spite of the disputes concerning this ephemeral and generally tragic dignity, its prestige as a position was still enforced among the natives, and any revolt always found the Moors united against it.

It was not long, however, before this solidarity was shaken. The garrisons mutinied, and offered battle to the troops of the pasha; rivalries spread among the soldiers, as they had among their chiefs. They divided into parties, of Fez, Marrakesh, and, in the the south, Moors. These different elements were not existing on their arrival in the Sudan, but had grown up in the various garrisons and the jealousies that arose among them. Little by little they gained independence and formed small governments, ruling the neighbouring countries. The governor of Timbuctoo

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retained the title of pasha, but it became a purely nominal one, and his authority was only recognised in his own region. The single remaining tie between the colony and Morocco was the tribute to the sultan, and that was paid as irregularly as possible.

In the eighteenth century the independence of the Sudan was complete; the name 'Moor' had even ceased to distinguish the masters of the country. The former conquerors had intermarried with the Songhois, and had increased and multiplied abundantly, their descendants being called Roumas, after El Mansour's musketeers, who had made such a terrible impression on their first appearance in the Sudan. The native organisation, Askia's viceroys and koïs, had disappeared, and many territories had asserted their independence under the government of local chiefs. The Roumas retained principally those banks of the Niger on which their forefathers had settled. Each group only concerned itself with its own region, and had no relations, beyond occasionally hostile ones, with neighbouring groups. Profiting by all this, two elements of confusion established themselves and augmented the general anarchy, viz. the Touaregs and the Foulbes.

The Touaregs were the first to exploit the situation. They crossed the river, exchanging their position in the sands of the Sahara for the opulent plains in the north of the valley. In 1770 they had taken Gao from the Roumas, and Timbuctoo in 1800. The constant rivalries of their distinct tribal divisions delayed the organisation of their conquests. It was not so, however, with the Foulbes.

Contrary to the opinion that obtains among the Europeans of the Sudan and Senegal, and is accepted to this day by the numerous books of travel, the Foulbes did not enter the Sudan

from the east. Neither did they come by the valley of the Nile, as some, identifying them with the Fellahs, believe: there is no connection between them. It was from the west, from the Adrar, the land of sand extending to the north of Senegal, that they arrived. The *Tarik* clearly says, 'The Foulbes are nations of the land of Tischitt.' They are connected with the white race, as are the Touaregs, and like them are pastoral nomads.

The Foulbes were probably forced back towards the Sudan when the Moors, driven out from Spain, invaded Adrar. This exodus towards the east was not an emigration, nor an invasion, nor a conquest. It was for these shepherds and their flocks a mere changing of pasture. A great number of them settled amid the fertility of Massina, and it is there that we see a powerfully organised empire arise in 1813.

Cheikou Ahmadou, its founder, not only ousted the Roumas,

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but made war upon the Touaregs and captured Timbuctoo from them, accomplishing all this in the space of twenty years.

He had been a petty chief reigning in the country of Noukouna (Massina) under the name of Ahmadou Lobo. He spread about the report that he was of the family of the Prophet, one of his ancestors having married a daughter of Mahomet; and he was, like all the Foulbes, a fanatically zealous Mussulman. In Africa, in the countries of the Niger and the Nile, fanaticism can be carried to all lengths, and his zeal was, in fact, the origin of his fortunes. His history is sufficiently curious; for us, practical masters of the Sudan, it is full of instruction.

An Arabian work, found at Timbuctoo, revealed his history to me. It was a little pamphlet of propaganda, written and disseminated by an influential marabut at the instigation of Cheikou Ahmadou. The author pompously addresses himself to the whole of Africa; 'to the sultans of Morocco, Tunis, and Algiers, to the Andalusians' (a Moorish tribe which had sought shelter in western Africa after their expulsion from Spain), 'to the populations living near the great salt sea (Atlantic), and to all people who are followers of Islam.

'The twelfth of the regenerating Khalifs, he after whom the Mahdi comes, is born. He is the Sheik, the Emir of the Faithful, Ahmadou ben Mohammed, who is risen to restore the faith of the Lord and to do battle for God in the Sudan.'

After this, it is necessary to prove that our friend is the twelfth Khalif. 'If I am asked for the proof of this,' says the devout marabut, 'I reply, the proof is to be found in the *Fatassi*, a history of our country written by that learned man of law, Mahmoud Koutou (or Koti).'

The author, under the pretence of quotation, now proceeds to very neatly relate his client to all the most celebrated Songhoi princes, and even to Askia the Great. He thus serves a double purpose, shedding upon the unknown the prestige of a popular

sovereign's glory, and securing the sympathy, if not the concurrence, of the Songhois populations. He dilates at great length upon the renown, goodness, and wisdom of the great Askia, details his pilgrimage to Mecca, announcing that he became Khalif, but adding that he was only the eleventh of those Khalifs whose coming had been foretold by Mahomet.

So far he is accurate enough and fairly approximates to history, but after this we enter the region of fable, the mythical facts of interested trickery. After recalling the fact that Askia conversed with and became the friend of Essoyouti at Cairo, the author of the pamphlet makes the famous sheik deliver himself of the following prophecy. 'After thee,' he announced to the king of the Songhois, 'the Sudan shall behold a twelfth Khalif, who will not be of thy family, Askia. A holy man shall arise, a priest shall he be and learned, an active man and an observer of the law, and he shall be called Ahmadou ben Mohammed, of the tribe of the Ulemas of Sonkor, and shall manifest himself in the island of Sibre-Massina. He shall inherit the Khalifat from thee, and shall have abundance of smiles, moral beauty, and victory, and he shall be established in all his designs. Thy greatness shall be surpassed by his, for he will have studied the sciences, while thou knowest only justice, prayer, and the elements of the faith. Such shall be the twelfth Khalif announced by Mahomet.'

No one but Askia would have persisted in the face of such very unpleasant predictions, but (according to the pamphlet) the great king desires to know more concerning the successor who is to have no connection with his family but is to surpass him in glory.

'Will this new Khalif find the faith prospering?' he asks. 'No,' the oracular sheik replies. 'He will find religion destroyed, but Ahmadou shall be as a spark among dry grass. God shall give him the victory over infidels, and will prosper all who aid him.

Those who see this Khalif and follow him shall be blessed as were the followers of Mahomet, and all who render obedience unto him shall be as those who obeyed the Prophet.

It can scarcely be necessary to explain that this prophecy is not to be found in the *Fatassi*, but was invented to assist the cause of Cheikou Ahmadou and the Foulbes. It is as well, however, to bring the document to light, as it was probably in the same manner that the Mahdi of the Egyptian Sudan was accredited fourteen years ago. It was thus we recently saw El Hadj Omar and Samory rise, and it will undoubtedly be in the cause of religious fanaticism that the country will be roused to revolt against our dominion in the future.

Our Sudanese possessions are peopled with divers races owning so little in common with one another, that it would always be possible to bring one tribe to reason with the assistance of another, on the condition that the religious influence, which alone could subdue the jealousies and dissensions of these different nations and unite them in a dangerous whole, must be at once and totally crushed.

Cheikou Ahmadou died in 1844, and was succeeded by his son Ahmadou Cheikou. Even during the lifetime of its founder this hastily constructed empire had shown signs of failing, for the Foulbes, rapacious and cruel to co-religionists and infidels alike, were kept constantly defending their supremacy. So great was their unpopularity that the inhabitants of Timbuctoo did not hesitate to call a third element to their assistance, and introduced the Berber tribe of Kountas from the south of Tunis into the valley of the Niger.

In addition to this, a rival dynasty was already dawning in the regions of the Upper Niger and Senegal. It was founded by a

member of the Toucouleurs, a tribe of negro and Foulbe half-breeds. Of insignificant origin, the son of a marabut, he too traded on a reputation for holiness. He made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and called himself El Hadj Omar. Like Cheikou Ahmadou, he put the whole of the southern Sudan to fire and sword under the pretext of a divine mission against the infidels—'the infidels' being all those who were unwilling to submit to his authority. Having pillaged and destroyed the south, he turned to the north and west, to attack the Foulbe empire and their new king, Ahmadou Ahmadou. A great battle took place at Sofara, which resulted in a victory to El Hadj Omar, and decided the supremacy of the valley of the Niger. Sorely wounded, Ahmadou Ahmadou, with a few faithful spirits, took flight in canoes, hoping to reach Timbuctoo.

Learning the direction taken by the fugitives, the king of the Toucouleurs commanded him to be pursued and taken alive. The wounded man would have offered some resistance on being overtaken, but the last of the faithful fled across the fields leaving Ahmadou alone, face to face with El Hadj Omar's people. On hearing the order that had been given to them, Ahmadou Ahmadou replied, 'I will not return to Omar. I will never see him in this world again.' He returned to the canoe, and taking his valuables from it he placed them upon the ground. Putting on a white garment he knelt and made salaam, then, having finished his prayer, he turned to the Toucouleurs and said, 'I will never be Omar's prisoner. Fulfil now my last request, and do that which is pleasing to God. Kill me, and all these things will I give to you in recompence, and you shall say to Omar he died of his wounds.'

Thus was the tale of the death of the last king of the Foulbes told me at Jenne. El Hadj Omar vowed undying hatred against

Ahmadou's family and slew eight of its members, two of Ahmadou's nephews alone succeeding in saving themselves. One of these two, Ahmadou Abdoulay, retreating to the east of the valley, became a small chief, and founded a dynasty that rules the little country of Fiou to this day.

The Foulbe dynasty was particularly distinguished, from one

JENNE

point of view, by its detestation of Europeans. It was at the instigation of Cheikou Ahmadou that Major Laing was killed on leaving Timbuctoo. Later, in 1834, Ahmadou persistently sought the death of Barth, who gives a very full account of the dangers he escaped, and of how it was to El Backay, the Kounta sheik, that he owed his life. This hatred was again manifested quite recently. In 1891 a lieutenant of the marines, M. Spitzer, sent as ambassador to Ahmadou Abdoulay, was very nearly assassinated in the capital one night; it was entirely owing to the swiftness of his horse that he escaped. This kinglet, alarmed by our unceasing progress, has since humbly implored pardon and paid tribute.

The death of Ahmadou Ahmadou was speedily followed by that of his conqueror. El Hadj Omar was scarcely installed in the capital of his foe before he was attacked by an army of Foulbes, accompanied by a reinforcement of Kountas. The Toucouleur held out for several months, but the town was finally captured. He succeeded in escaping to the neighbouring mountains of Bandiagara, and there he learned in his turn to know all the desolation of defeat which had been suffered by Ahmadou Ahmadou. His death, not so heroic as that of his victim, came about in the following manner. Being pursued by his enemies he sought refuge in a cave, which they surrounded and blew up with gunpowder, and El Hadj Omar perished in its ruins (1863).

The Toucouleurs, under the government of Tidiani, a nephew of the late king, still remained masters of the north of the valley. Tidiani was succeeded by his son, who was opposed by his brothers in a series of civil wars which terminated in 1877, leaving Ahmadou sole ruler.

A new prophet entered the scenes about this time, he too massacring and pillaging in the name of God. He was Samory, that scourge of the valley and of the left bank of the Niger.

But little by little, under the directions of General Borgnis-Desbordes, our forts advanced towards the great river, and we were installed upon its banks at Bammaku in 1883. Our gunners made us known in the north while our columns pursued Samory in the south. Colonel Archinard continued our march along the course of the Niger, and the capture of Segu marked the termination of the Toucouleur dominion in 1892. We reached Jenne in 1893, and before the end of the same year the tricolour flag waved over Timbuctoo.

These few pages of history, and the fresh information they contain, are not necessary only to explain Jenne and its Egyptian architecture, they have another claim on our attention.

They serve to show that we have taken possession of the Sudan at an exceptionally favourable moment as far as ease of conquest is concerned. But they also show that we arrived after two hundred years of its worst misfortunes, and at a time singularly unpropitious to the prosperity of the country.

The Moors were the first cause of the work of disintegration, which steadily increased during the two centuries of their reign, to reach its maximum in the present day. The history of this disruption is a tissue of accumulated misery and desolation.

We find the country in a most abnormal political and economical position, a position which is general, not localised and partial. From north, east, and south Touaregs, Foulbes, Toucouleurs and Kountas have flung their starveling herds into this promised land. They appear in the light of some monstrous association eager to destroy the happy privileges nature showered upon these rich territories, and labouring to annihilate the benefits of an ancient civilisation in the triumph of their native barbarism. And all this in the name of the one God! Cheikou Ahmadou, El Hadj Omar, and Samory were not the only devastating prophets. I have pruned numerous other fanatic and sanguinary meteors from these pages who account for a lesser share of the great sum of evil.

During all this time agriculture was interrupted and commerce destroyed. The river was deserted of its canoes, and the traffic of the caravan became impossible. The markets were empty, the

population decimated by slavery and famine, and entire countries were depopulated by emigration.

The negro race is so prolific, however, thanks to polygamy, and the earth is so fertile, thanks to the inundations of the Niger, that all these evils will be repaired in a few years owing to the peace and organisation we have introduced in the country.

CHAPTER VIII

JENNE—YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

During the miseries of the three centuries following upon the Moorish conquest Gao disappeared. The Touaregs swept through it, and left behind them a mere fraction of the grandeur and civilisation, the customs and ancestral traditions, of the Songhoi capital. Barth was fortunate in finding even the site of the city remaining. A massive tower (such as we see at Timbuctoo), representing both the ruin of the grand mosque and the tomb of Mohammed Askia, was, with the exception of a few native huts, all that he found there.

Jenne, most happily, has reached us nearly intact. So complete is this town that we can trace the thoughts and life of the Songhoi people in it better than we could ever have done at Gao. By what miracle has it been preserved? By none, but simply by the exceptionally privileged position of the town and its surrounding country. The land here marvellously resembles that of Egypt, and the emigrants were evidently struck by the similarity, realising that their peculiar qualities would best thrive in this place.

What more could they ask than this vast plain, periodically inundated by the united rise of the Niger and its confluent the Bani. The Kouakouru, a curious and important channel, connects these rivers with Jenne. From July to November the stream

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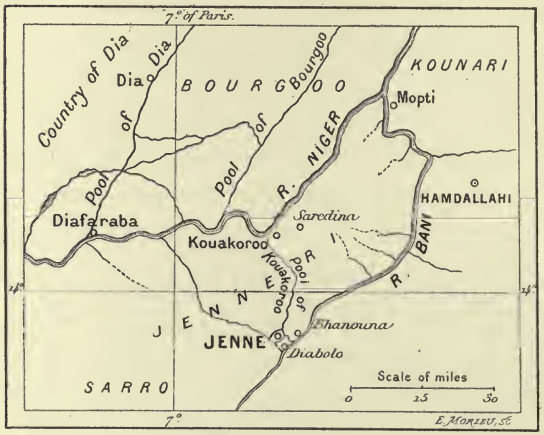
flows from the Bani to the Niger, for the four succeeding months it flows from the Niger to the Bani, and during the rest of the year it has no current at all. This alternation has been remarked by the natives, and recorded in the following naïve observation: 'Our country is watered by two great rivers that marry at Mopti. The Bani is the male, and the Niger is the female element. At first the Bani fills the Niger, but some time afterwards the Niger, grown great, returns its fulness to the Bani.'



MAP OF JENNERI

The scientific explanation of this phenomenon is simple. The Niger and the Bani pursue an almost parallel course, and are enlarged at the same period of the year by the same rains. The course of the Niger is impeded, however, by great natural dams, and it has in addition to fill the Pools of Dia and Bourgoo, while that of the Bani is free, and augments no reservoirs. Inasmuch as the waters of the Niger are more considerable, the two rivers do not overflow at the same time of the year. The Bani rises first, and as it encounters no obstacle, and suffers no diminution, it can by means of the Kouakouru, transfer its superabundance to the Niger. The larger river attains its fullest height later on, and it is then the Niger that flows into its diminished confluent. The immense plain is flooded from September to October, and during

this period the waters of the Bani are at their highest. This is not the case with the Niger, but its mass is nevertheless greatly augmented, and forms a barrier against the rapid currents of the Bani at Mopti. The level of the latter, owing to this dam of water, begins to rise. The Pool of Kouakouru and the various channels rise also, and the surrounding country, owing to the absence of protective dykes, is flooded. At this period the appearance of the region closely resembles that of the valley of the Nile in times of inundation. The villages of the Songhoi agriculturist emerge from the sheet of water like those of the Fellahs. They are built of the same light grey clay upon mounds more or less artificial, and are interspersed with the same feathery tufts of palm-trees. The roads and the banks of river, channels, and pools have entirely disappeared, canoes being the only means of communication remaining to the villagers. The great plain has become a great sea strewn with grey islands crested with green.

The waters subside in November, and rice (the principal cereal of this region), having been planted in the first rains, is then harvested. The soil being moist and easily worked, a second harvest of millet or maize is prepared. The wonderful fertility of the grouud is such that two closely consecutive harvests may be obtained from it.

'Fortune has showered its gifts upon Jenneri,' says the old chronicle; 'its markets are held every day of the week, and its populations are very numerous. Its seven thousand villages are so near to one another that the chief of Jenne has no need of messengers. If he wishes to send a command to Lake Debo, for instance, it is cried from the gate of the town, and repeated from village to village, by which means it reaches its destination almost instantly.'

The meeting of many channels in this golden land severs an island from the plain, and that island is Jenne.

Was it chance, or was it intention resulting from inquiry, that drew the first Songhois to establish here the frontier town of their empire? It matters very little; inspiration or choice was equally remarkable.

The position was impregnable. If it were attacked in the fall

THE ISLAND AND TOWN OF JENNE

of the rivers, when its girdle of waters was fordable in parts, its banks (from twenty to sixteen feet high), crowned by a ten-foot wall, still presented an inaccessible front. In the floods the enemy would have required special apparatus and instruments of war which were unknown in those days. To starve it into capitulation would have been the work of at least two years; and it would have needed a formidable army to blockade both land and water, for Jenne is defended by its channels, pools, and floods as much as by its walls.

Its inhabitants do not forget to tell you that Jenne, alone

among all the cities of the Sudan, was never taken, destroyed, nor pillaged. The *Tarik* confirms this assertion. When Gao and the rest of the Songhoi empire became the tributaries and vassals of the powerful kingdom of the Mali, Jenne and its people remained independent. 'There were many battles, nearly a hundred, and the people of Jenne were always victorious. After the last defeat the Malinkas said, "We will come again"; but in this year (1664) in which I write, the hundredth battle has not been fought, and the Malinkas have not returned.'

Proud of its wealth and conscious of its power, was it at the height of the Mali supremacy that Jenne broke loose from the links binding it to the decadent Songhoi empire, and asserted its independence? Most probably it was, inasmuch as, somewhere about that time (fourteenth century), the army of Mossi took Timbuctoo, and separated Jenne completely and effectively from the rest of the empire. When Sunni Ali restored the power of the Songhois, his longest and most obstinately opposed campaign was directed against these people. He invested the town, and, according to some, he devoted seven years, seven months, and seven days to the siege; others allow only four years. However that may be, his entire army was collected in the country for so long a period that his soldiers turned farmers. Jenne being suddenly threatened with famine, the chief of the town proposed peace, and Sunni Ali, wearied out on his side, hastened to accord the most honourable terms. So far from humiliating it in the day of its capitulation, he seated his former enemy on his right hand, married his mother, and, most important of all as far as we are concerned, he respected the town.

Thus returned to the bosom of the Songhoi empire, Jenne supported her lot with resignation. In the Moorish conquest she compounded with the victors, as she did later with the Foulbes,

and again a hundred years after with the Toucouleurs. She would have spontaneously opened her gates to Colonel Archinard had it not been for Alpha Moussa, the commander of the Toucouleur garrison.

Jenne possesses another advantage in its insular position, from an archæological point of view. The town, being built in a comparatively limited space, could not invite the settlement of foreign elements in any numbers sufficient to influence her appearance and customs. In another situation the city would have enlarged into suburbs, which, being incorporated with the town, would, by degrees, have modified its earlier aspect, as was evidently the case at Gao. But Jenne in her island has remained as completely herself as if she had been enclosed in a tower of ivory.

We know that the palaces and temples of the Pharaohs were raised by blows of the lash, and the fathers of the Songhois probably laboured under them. The builders of these edifices were themselves content with modest earthen dwellings; and if the construction of houses in the new country had been a matter of quarrying and shaping blocks of stone, they would have been satisfied with the primitive native hut, and I should not have seen a city of the Pharaohs existing to this day. Fortunately the Songhois discovered a suitable material for the building of their town, which was neither the granite nor sandstone of Egyptian monuments, but was merely a clay, plentifully found in the island and its neighbourhood. Humble as it was, to these new-comers it must have been inestimably precious, since it replaced that mud which the negro is obliged to solidify by mixing with gravel, manure, or any filth that comes to hand before he can build with it. It was not the wretched *banco* that makes Segu so unhealthy

when the deluges of the winter season soak into the infected sponges that represent its houses, but was a good stiff clay, solid, resisting, and wholesome.

They were enabled to make regular bricks from it, flat, long,

BRICK-MAKING

and rounded at the ends like those of ancient Egypt. Except in the Songhoi countries, the negro does not proceed thus, but is content to fashion his *banco* into irregular balls as he uses them. These bricks, being baked by the fierce Sudanese sun, are set in the walls with mortar, and finally receive a special rough-casting. Dwellings thus constructed are of great durability, and have all the appearance of being cut from one enormous block of stone. They defy the heaviest tornadoes of rain and wind in an astonishing manner, and with some repairing, which consists entirely of renewed rough-casting, they last for centuries.

These clay bricks are admirably suited to the massive and

simple lines of Egyptian architecture, and the Songhois could build on as large a scale with them as could the Pharaohs with their great blocks of stone. Owing to their being enabled to work quickly and easily with this clay, the town could be begun and completed while the memory of their native country was still vividly before them.

Above all, the houses of Jenne display that essential characteristic of Egyptian art—the pyramidal form, which represented solidity to those ancient architects. The walls of the oldest constructions have a slight inward inclination, and possess no windows, or only the roughest sketch of them. Light and air enter through openings cut in the ceiling or roof. In all the negro habitations the roofs are rounded to carry off the terrible deluges of winter, but here they are flat, like those of the valley of the Nile, where rain is scarce. The Songhois knew no more how to construct an arch than did the Egyptians. The summits of their dwellings are ornamented by those triangular battlements which may be seen on the palaces of Rameses Meiamoun. The pylon, which is another characteristic of Egyptian architecture, gives access to the dwellings of Jenne, and forms, too, a motive of decoration, the façades of the houses being adorned with great buttresses of pylonic form. You would suppose these buttresses were intended to give additional support to the edifice, but interrogation of the local architects convinces you that they are merely ornamental adjuncts. Moreover, they are only to be found in the houses of the wealthy, though the poorer dwellings are no less solidly constructed. On certain buildings two of these pylons are united at their summit by a projecting plinth, recalling the ancient propylon. In short, the effect of the whole, its harmonious proportions, the symmetrical distribution of its ornamental motives, and its massiveness, unmistakably proclaim the art of Egypt.

If we refer to the antique bas-reliefs which reproduce the principal features of the ancient Egyptian habitations, and to the works of the orientalists, we shall find they agree in every particular with the buildings of Jenne. 'The private houses were simple, and were not constructed of stone nor granite, as were the temples and palaces, but of rough bricks. The walls were

plastered within and without, and enclosed a suite of rooms which were not uniformly disposed, but were divided according to the taste of the proprietor. They consisted of a ground floor and a second floor surmounted by a terrace. The approaches to the wealthiest houses were adorned with pylons and obelisks. The summits and angles of the clay walls were finished by a kind of framework of reeds held together by transverse bands. The roof was flat, and formed by placing planks across the length and breadth of the house; branches and rushes were strewn upon them,

and the whole was covered by a thin layer of earth reduced to the consistency of mud. This covering slightly projected from all sides of the wall.'

The same methods of construction are pursued in the buildings of Jenne; all these details are to be found, with others that are veritably stupefying when seen in the heart of a negro country. A system of baked pipes is established in every dwelling to carry away the household water, and latrines, with perfectly constructed drainage, are established on all the terraces.

The survival, through all those ages, of this method of building is due, not only to the fact that the town has never been destroyed, but also to the great durability of the houses. I was shown some which were three or four hundred years old, their age being proved by the fact that their ground floors were about three feet below the level of the street outside. Centuries of layers have raised these roads as they have those of Jerusalem, which stands to-day fourteen or sixteen feet above its original level. Successive generations always possessed, therefore, some models of ancient times, and their types have been handed down to the present day. The great pent-houses with which some are supplied form their chief digression. This addition to the principal doors was provoked by the torrents of rain which threatened to flood the ground floors. They are massively designed, somewhat resembling the mantles of our ancient fireplaces, and are in nowise out of harmony with the façades. One or two courts are arranged inside the dwellings, and the few openings for air and light in the latter are embellished with slabs of terra-cotta, ornamentally designed, and set in the walls. The Moors, who installed themselves at Jenne after the conquest, introduced the use of windows with wooden shutters in the Arabian style, the only growth of their art they succeeded in engrafting. Moreover, these windows were

not manufactured in Jenne, but were imported whole from Timbuctoo.

The Egyptian originality of the town must have been greatly jeopardised by the Moorish arrival, for the new-comers, impregnated as they were with Arabian art, would assuredly attempt other innovations. Thanks to its precious clay, however, Jenne remained unspoiled, for this substance did not lend itself to the construction of little columns and colonnades, and Moorish arcades, nor was it suitable for arabesques and all that slenderness of detail that have caused Fez and Marrakesh to resemble Cairo and Algiers. Some adaptations would doubtless be attempted, but they would crumble away in the first rains, and thus the city has remained faithful to its ancient traditions, preserving through twelve centuries indubitable proofs of its origin.

Although private houses are numerous, the type of monumental edifice is lacking. It did exist, however. The domicile of the governor of Jenne was of much greater dimensions than those of the ordinary dwelling; his rank, and the custom of maintaining a numerous retinue, would require it. His house, which was called the Madou, would have supplied us with the missing example of the Songhoi palace, but unfortunately in the eleventh century an event occurred which swept away this monument. 'The town remained pagan,' reports the *Tarik* and popular tradition, 'until the fifth century of the Hegira (1050). At that period it followed the example of its chief Koumbourou, and adopted Islamism. The chief convoked all the ulemas of the country, and more than four thousand obeyed the summons. Koumbourou, having shaved his head in their presence and announced his conversion, asked the ulemas to address the following prayer to God in favour of the town: 'That any person who should arrive there, having quitted

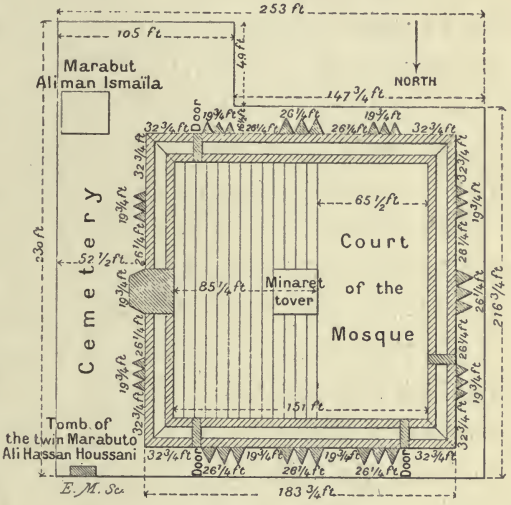
his country from poverty and an inability to live in it, should receive from God such abundant and easy means of life that he should forget his native land. That Jenne should become a great centre of commerce, and that its inhabitants should be overwhelmed with wealth.' This the ulemas did, and the prosperity of the town is a proof that God heard their prayers.

On becoming a Mussulman Koumbourou destroyed his palace and built a mosque upon its site. He lived to see its completion, but it was his successor who surrounded it with walls.

The zeal of the neophyte has thus robbed us of the sight of an ancient Songhoi palace. The fact is the more lamentable that the various Sudanese chronicles give no compensating description of the building. The temple that was built to the new God somewhat attenuates these regrets, however, for the grand mosque of Jenne was long famous in the valley of the Niger, being considered more beautiful than the Kasbah of Mecca itself.

It was an enormous block, rigidly square, its sides measuring one hundred and eighty-three feet long by thirty-nine feet high. Besides the usual pylonic adornments, three groups of buttresses were distributed on each façade. Every group was composed of three deep ridges, possessing a projection of nine feet at the base, which diminished as they rose. The first of these groups was thirty-two feet from the angles of the building, and they were separated from one another by an interval of about twenty-six feet. The walls were crowned with triangular battlements separated by the terminating ridges of the buttresses, which were of similar form, but greater in height. The building was oriented with each façade towards one of the cardinal points, but the sides were not absolutely uniform with one another.

The north and south façades displayed two rows of windows.[1] The north gave admission to the faithful through two doors, the south through one only. The eastern (which was the sacred side, that looked towards Mecca), was uninterrupted by either door or window, and its surface was only broken by pylonic adornments and the three groups of buttresses. The western side was also without a door.



PLAN OF THE OLD MOSQUE

The double rows of windows might lead one to suppose that the interior of the edifice was composed of two stories. It was nothing of the kind; they lighted a closed gallery which ran round the square. Opposite the sacred eastern side was a row of nine triforiums.[2] Their dimensions were analogous to those of the gallery which formed the veritable body and sanctuary of the edifice. The interior was softly gloomy, its only light being admitted through some openings in the high ceiling, by reflections grudgingly let in by the two passages, by some windows in the great gallery, and by the two doors opening on to the court of the mosque. This latter occupied a wide space

[1] The windows form squares of nineteen inches at a three-foot interval. The first row is sixteen feet from the ground, and the second twenty-four feet or thereabouts.

[2] Each triforium formed a gallery of little less than six feet six inches wide by thirty-two feet high. The walls of this part were rather more than two feet thick, while the walls of the gallery were about four feet thick.

in front of the ninth triforium, and measured one hundred and fifty feet long, by sixty-five wide.

In the centre of the building, between the seventh and ninth triforiums, rose a quadrangular tower, of which two sides measured twenty-six feet at the base. Steps were cut in it, and it opened on to the terraced roof by means of an edicule, from which a marabut called the faithful to the five daily prayers. Another of these edicules was placed in the centre of the eastern side.

A low wall ran round the building at a distance of sixteen feet from it, widening respectfully to sixty-five feet before the sacred façade, and forming there a spacious parade. This was the holy ground in which the venerated marabuts, together with the scholars and people of importance, reposed in their last sleep. It was their Pantheon, and this chosen cemetery harmonised with the high wall that looked towards the Kasbah. With its ridged buttresses alternating with pylons, and with no doors nor windows to break its uniform grandeur by a note of life, this eastern façade gave a very forcible impression of a mausoleum.

The mosque was built on rising ground in the south of the town. A great excavation at its feet provided the materials for its construction, and served to further separate it from the town, so that it stood out from the surrounding fortifications and houses, soaring above them like a castle.

Is it necessary to refer once more to the Egyptian atavism revealed in its massive dimensions, in the plan and symmetry of its construction? Is it not better to dwell upon the fact that the only materials employed by its architects were clay and wood, and yet, in spite of that, their work lasted eight centuries?

It still survived sixty years ago, and would have lasted many centuries longer if Cheikou Ahmadou, the great Foulbe conqueror, had not commanded its destruction in 1830.

THE OLD MOSQUE RESTORED

For a long time this command remained inexplicable to me. How came a prince, a well-known fanatic, to destroy a mosque? 'Because there were so many mosques,' said one. 'Because it claimed to be more beautiful than that of Mecca,' said another, with greater probability. Priestly *amour-propre* caused them to conceal the true reason, and it was a priestly jealousy that revealed it to me.

I was holding a *séance* of human documents one day, and among its members were three marabuts; two of them were natives of Jenne, and the third was from Segu. In this religious society I did not fail to return to the question of the destruction of the mosque. Quite in vain; the two natives reiterated the same imbecile reasons I had already heard, while the third sat silent, obstinately studying his sandals.

It did not occur to me that there had been any special significance in this attitude, until I saw him mysteriously reappear very early next morning. After rapidly examining my dwelling upon all sides, he entered, and closing the door, he assumed the attitude of the evening before, saying, 'You asked us why Cheikou Ahmadou destroyed the old mosque. I know the reason, but the history of it is unpleasant to Jenne, and the marabuts naturally do not care to repeat it. That is why I did not tell it to you yesterday. I will do so now, and you shall go to them, saying, Is this true?'

Which I did; and the two marabuts confirmed the story, pretending to have learned it in the interval.

Part of Cheikou Ahmadou's youth had been spent in Jenne. He was sent there by his parents to acquire learning from the numerous marabuts and scholars of the place. As his family was neither rich nor powerful, the young man was forced to lead the

life of a poor student, and the alms of wealthy merchants were his sole support. The town was prosperous, and the Sudan was enjoying its last years of comparative tranquillity. Plenty of amusements went on in Jenne, and strangers lived a joyous life there, thanks to the laxity that prevailed in manners and matters of religion.

Young Ahmadou, who, like most of the Foulbes, was austere both from necessity and a rigid faith—Ahmadou, who was destined to take the title of Emir of the True Believers, conceived a great horror of all this depravity. The special quarters of the corruption were none other than the precincts of the old mosque. The centre of debauch was just opposite that sacred eastern wall which should have recalled the image of the Kasbah to the minds of the faithful, and dances were held there to the sounds of tom-tom and bafalon. Owing to its numerous foreign elements, the town could supply the whole repertoire of the lascivious dances of the Sudan. The neighbouring huts sold an intoxicating drink (a kind of beer called dolo), which was naturally forbidden to Mohammedans. An evening thus begun often terminated in low houses erected close to the west wall of the mosque, and even more frequently the dancers sauntered about the galleries of the mosque itself. Already full of ambitious plans, Cheikou Ahmadou swore to put an end to these scandals on the day that God should put the power in his hands.

Twenty-five years later, having destroyed the power of the Roumas and taken Timbuctoo and Jenne, he kept his word. He also forbade idolatrous strangers to enter the town, as he considered them the first cause of the corruption. In order to still further punish Jenne, he founded a new capital on the right bank of the Bani, calling it El-Lamdou-Lillahi (To the praise of God), the Hamdallai of to-day. Finally, to purify the quarter in which

the dancing and drinking had taken place, he built the new mosque, which, simple, bare, and common-place, marks the spot to this day. When it was completed he ordained his son and successor, Ahmadou Cheikou, his grand Iman, and then—he commanded the destruction of the old mosque (1830).

All that now remains of it is a heap of ruins, surrounded and preserved by their enclosing walls. The interior of the edifice has disappeared, the triforiums, the ceiling, the galleries, and the two towers are totally effaced. The great walls offered more resistance to the destroyers, and are only partially broken through. With the assistance of these, and the memories of the old men, my work of re-construction was easy enough. The rows of windows are fairly distinguishable, so are the indented lines of the terrace and the positions of the great buttresses. Guided by these indications it was not difficult to trace the walls of the triforiums, the minarets, and the extent of the court. The only consolation left for its destruction lies in the fact that it is now possible to verify the great antiquity of the monument. This is easily done by a method resembling that of the woodman, who determines the age of a tree by the concentric circles of its trunk. From the great walls of the façade, whose normal thickness was three feet, I removed a layer of rough-casting not less than thirty-five inches thick. According to the old houses, the masons allowed about four inches a century, which would take us back to the eleventh century, and this date would correspond with that given by the *Tarik*.

The venerated tombs were the only things respected by Cheikou Ahmadou, and they now form a cemetery, or rather a charnel-house, in which I spent many hours of research. I had no idea that I was in a place of tombs and corpses the first time I saw it. The surface of the earth was pierced here and there by

THE RUINS OF THE OLD MOSQUE

terra-cotta pipes similar to those employed in the household drainage of the town. Here, planted vertically in the soil, you would take them for the chimneys of troglodyte dwellings. But on looking down these supposed chimneys you find them full of earth; they are connected with subterranean dwellings, however, for this is the abode of the dead, and these pipes mark their tombs.

In some places the earth had fallen through, and I could

THE CEMETERY IN THE MIDST OF THE RUINS

distinguish piles of skeletons that were only separated from one another by thin layers of earth. The dead sleep so closely to one another that in a short time there will be more human dust than earth in this little place. One seldom sees the living in this spot, but there is life here, of a sort, that is very intense and active, and is produced by the dead lying below the red tubes.

Eagles and crows, hovering overhead, swoop suddenly down upon the dogs and rats that dig up the tombs. Legions of red and yellow lizards frisk unconcernedly about in this world of worms and insects. Goats and their kids make pretty spots of white and red against the sombre tones of the ruined walls. They

too find a living in this dead heap; the grass must be savoury here, and they can enjoy such delightful climbs among these ruins. But the kings of the place are the enormous iguanas—green, and large as crocodiles; the daintiest morsels of the charnel-house are for them, and they have traced long passages from drain to drain. They find many a feast there—corpses, and worms that they snap up with their long double tongues, rats, lizards, scorpions, and others. The ground is littered with the remains of its inhabitants: tibias and shoulder-blades here, femurs there, with occasional shreds of intestines. There are no skulls. Is it possible that the animals consider as inferior that part which man values most?

All this is not in the least sad or gloomy. At the foot of the ruins, from town, market, and crowd, mount the great sounds of life. The sun pours its floods of intense light and gaiety upon this double death; upon those mounds where the works of God and the works of man are done with, and are crumbling away together.

'Jenne is one of the greatest commercial towns of Islam. The salt of Thegazza and the gold of Boundou are sought there, and its inhabitants have acquired great riches. Good fortune is in its soil, and on account of this blessed city men come to Timbuctoo from all parts.'

So says an old Sudanese chronicle of the sixteenth century. How did such a commercial centre come about? and why at Jenne rather than any other town? The reason is to be found in the wealth and configuration of this part of the Sudan.

The wonderful fertility of the soil yields, as we know, a profusion of exchangeable produce, and the hydrographic system, which gives such exceptional irrigation to agriculture, also offers means of transport which is all that could be desired. These great advantages are not peculiar to Jenne, however, but are

VIEW OF THE INTERIOR OF JENNE AND THE OLD MOSQUE

common to all the towns above and below her. Moreover, if her insular position was an excellent one from point of view of security, it was a serious drawback where communication was concerned. Segu and Sansanding on one side, and Mopti, Korienza, Sa, and Sarafara on the other, possessed the advantage of being situated on the Niger itself; yet Jenne was the town that attained the greatest celebrity. She not only ranked above Timbuctoo, but took her place among the great commercial centres of Islam. And why?

Because, among all the towns of the Niger, Jenne alone was a Songhoi city. Because her inhabitants bore within them the germs of the great Egyptian civilisation. Because, from the midst of the gloom of barbarity which covered the whole of the valley, Jenne stood out as the luminous point in which the cultured man appeared. Because this culture gave Jenne conceptions, and the means for executing them, that were unknown to her rivals.

In place of the primitive barter between village and village, and market and market, she created a true commerce. Her inhabitants formulated 'business firms,' in the European sense of the word, which were provided with a routine and staff similar to our own. They established representatives in important centres and opened branches at Timbuctoo. They sent out travelling agents who received so much per cent. on the business they accomplished, and were, in fact, no other than our 'commercial travellers.' The staff was composed of relatives and slaves, or free men who were obliged to earn their living. Among their numbers there were occasionally, as with us, certain indelicate members who disappeared with the merchandise that had been intrusted to them.

Thus organised, Jenne drains the whole of the Sudan in general, and the south of the valley in particular, through the

medium of the markets of Baramandougou, San, and Bla. The ground floors of its large houses serve as spacious bonded warehouses by means of which their merchandise is not exposed to the rain and numerous parasites, as is the negro's. These storehouses are filled with cereals, great sacks of rice and millet, jars full of honey, blocks of karita covered with leaves and bound with rushes, arachides, spices, onions, cakes of indigo, baskets of kola-nuts, neta flour, monkey bread (the fruit of the baobab), and bars of a wonderful iron brought from Karaguana (a country near Mossi), packets of ostrich feathers, ivory, virgin gold, civet musk; lead from the mountains of Hombouri and marble bracelets from the same place (ornaments greatly affected by the inhabitants of Nigerian countries); antimony, used by the negresses to darken the orbits of their eyes and increase their brilliancy—the blonde among them (for there are fair negresses) using it to darken their complexions; native fabrics, fine linen and woollen textiles, long white lengths of stuff from which the ample garments of these people are made, *pagnes de Segu* for the women, and superb large draperies artistically patterned in yellow, black, copper-colour, and blue. I must not forget to mention another kind of merchandise, warehoused in the same place and as much in demand as any of the preceding, namely, slaves.

There is no specialisation of trade. Every one sells everything: textiles, human flesh, cereals, metals, and spices. These merchants do not carry on their real trade in the market—they merely send thither agents provided with a small stock; their true business is done in the penumbra of their large Egyptian dwellings.

With this abundance of products, the means of assembling, and shops to shelter them, there still remains the problem of

transport. It was Jenne that taught the Sudanese the art of commercial navigation. Its boats could be compared with the aboriginal pirogue as little as the town could with a native city or its houses with the native huts. The negro's canoe is a mere sketch of a boat, hollowed out from the trunk of a tree, and at the mercy of the least of the Niger's breezes. It can only carry the smallest of cargoes, and, in order not to capsize it, the occupants are obliged to sit motionless as a Buddha in a Hindu temple or practise the agility of a Japanese equilibrist.

But the people of Jenne built regular vessels that were large and steady. The framework or body is not formed of regular planks adjusted and nailed to the keel, as one would expect, but is made of irregular blocks of Kaïcedra ebony or cedar-wood. These blocks are pierced with holes, then juxtaposed like pieces of Mosaic, and held together by

BUILDING A LARGE BOAT

strong hempen cords; the recipe apparently being: Take holes and surround them with rope and wood. They are finally made sufficiently water-tight by means of straw, tow, and clay; this method of construction imparting to them an elasticity that is highly desirable in view of the frequent groundings encountered on the sandbanks of the river.

Not being limited to the size of a tree-trunk, the Songhois construct boats measuring between fifty-eight and sixty-five feet

long by ten broad, and able to carry from twenty to thirty tons. To convey the same weight by land would necessitate a caravan of a thousand porters, or two hundred camels or three hundred bullocks. Instead of any one of these costly methods, a single vessel, with from six to ten boatmen, is all that is required, which clearly proves the superiority of Jenne to the surrounding country.

Its great merchants have their own boats devoted exclusively to transport. The less wealthy have fleets of regular fly-boats at their disposal, which carry merchandise and passengers at a fixed tariff. Bars of iron, blocks of karita, jars, anything, in short, that water cannot damage, are stored in the hold, and upon these are piled sacks of cereals and the more delicate merchandise. A compact mass is thus obtained which forms the deck, and upon this the passengers lie or squat, protected by an awning from the sun. A space is left in the middle of the hold for baling out and cooking purposes. These fly-boats travel all day, and only stop at sunset for the evening meal; when there is a moon the journey is resumed as soon as it rises. For a consideration of 1500 cowries (2 frs. 50 c.) you can go to Timbuctoo (a twenty days' journey), or for three francs you can send thither a hundredweight of goods.

Other towns, such as Sansanding, Korienza, and Sarafara, learned how to construct these large boats, which, wherever they may have been built, are invariably called 'Jenne boats.' Little by little an active commercial movement was diffused among the labyrinths of the Niger. But Jenne still retained her position as metropolis, owing partly to the superiority of her inventive resources, and partly to her isolation, which protected her from the sudden cataclysms and destructions to which the other cities were subject.

By means of her numerous fleets, her more civilised manners, progress and architecture spread throughout the western valley, even penetrating to Timbuctoo and the Kong country. After leaving Bammaku I found adaptations of her architecture everywhere: in the façades of the royal dwellings of Segu and in the town gates. All the mosques, though of more modest proportions, are built in the style of the old mosque at Jenne.

The sole point of contact between these vast regions and the Songhoi world, Jenne had morally dominated them long before they were actually conquered by the kings of her race. With this supremacy augmented by her fabulous wealth, it is small wonder that she was enabled to hold her own in 'nearly a hundred battles' against the Mali kings, who were practically the masters of the valley. Her work of civilisation continued uninterruptedly through centuries. Slowly she prepared the Western Sudan for

JENNE: A CORNER OF THE QUAY

that sudden and brilliant flight revealed by history in the great century of the Askias (1500-1600).

This civilising *rôle* would be a title in itself to a place in the memories of mankind, but she possessed another of equal importance: she could claim to be the foundress of Timbuctoo.

Her commercial attention must have been fixed from the first upon that inestimable commodity which the Sudan lacked, viz. salt. The caravans bringing it from the Thegazza mines returned by the interior, instead of diverging to the east towards the river. Their precious burden would thus be rapidly diffused among the wealthier towns (notably Oualata), and but a costly fraction of it would reach the banks of the Niger.

Jenne would therefore take especial pains to assure a regular salt-market from which she could provide herself with large quantities at a fair price. This would naturally lead her to the discovery of the admirable geographical position of Timbuctoo, which was situated at the very doors of the Mali people and on the confines of her frontier. Caravans could go there direct from the mines, and the merchandise be secured at first hand; Jenne's great vessels, her most valuable auxiliaries, would now enter upon the scene, and the new market would thus be established.

Timbuctoo (as we shall see later) could hardly be said to exist until the merchants of Jenne settled there, and brought all that the wealth of the Sudan could offer to the indigent starvelings of the desert in exchange for their loads of salt. The traders of Morocco and Tuat followed in her train, and in this way Jenne, although she did not actually create, undoubtedly founded Timbuctoo, for she was the means of transforming the poor hamlet into a great commercial centre of universal renown.

The Sudanese express this idea in their saying: 'Jenne and Timbuctoo are two halves of the same city.' It is, in fact, a

portion of Jenne that lies out there on the threshold of the desert; her great merchants have homes and agents in the town, and during several months of the year they personally direct operations there. But in spite of this, the parts played in the Sudanese commerce by these two halves are in no way homogeneous. Jenne's is the active, preponderating, and most interesting share; she represents the producer, the great merchant who settles in the centre of a country to utilise all its powers and resources. The character of Timbuctoo, on the other hand, is passive; she is the counting-house, the branch, a mere *dépôt*. Her inhabitants are brokers, intermediaries, and innkeepers, and she has always been inferior to Jenne both in wealth and commercial importance. This is why the old chronicle speaks of Jenne, and not Timbuctoo, as being one of the most considerable towns of Islam, adding, 'It is on account of the blessed city of Jenne that men come to Timbuctoo from all sides.'

How comes it, then, that Timbuctoo has acquired notoriety all over the world while Jenne has remained comparatively unknown? The distinct characters of the two towns will explain this injustice. The caravans of North Africa, Morocco, Tuat, and Tripoli, which made the renown of Timbuctoo, never went beyond that city, and knew nothing of the Western Sudan. They had no need to prolong their journey into the south so long as Timbuctoo offered in great quantities all the merchandise they had come to seek. Even if it had occurred to the more enlightened among them that they would obtain these goods at cheaper rates in the country of their production, the paths thither were encumbered by considerable difficulties.

Nature, in creating, at the immediate south of Timbuctoo, a land that was a network of tributaries and channels and was periodically submerged, had closed the doors of the Sudan

against the caravans of northern Africa. Their camels, admirably adapted to the passage of the desert, would have been totally useless in such a country, and would soon have perished from the excessive moisture. The north, therefore (at that time Europe's sole source of information concerning the interior), totally ignored the Sudan proper; they only knew, and could only know, Timbuctoo. This crushing preponderance is far from obtaining in the Sudan, however, where the name of Jenne is known to every one, while Timbuctoo is frequently ignored.

The renown of the Songhoi town extends to the Kong country in the south, and to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. She sends merchandise to the sea-coast; and when the first Europeans trading between Banin and Cape Palmas asked where the gold and produce offered them for sale came from, the natives answered 'from Jenne.' Her name was thus given to the Gulf of Guinea, and, indirectly, to an English coin, the guinea, so called because the first pieces were struck from gold coming from there.

Of all the great cities of the Niger, Jenne was the one to suffer least from the long period of anarchy that the history of the Sudan has revealed to us. Signs of violence are not visible at first sight as they are at Nyamina and Sansanding. It was, nevertheless, cruelly used under the Toucouleur dominion. 'We suffered nothing but vexation and pillage,' an old chief told me. 'El Hadj Omar was a brigand, and his sons and generals have carried on his trade. Little by little the town has been emptied of its original inhabitants. Thou wilt find more of the people of Jenne in the surrounding country than in the city itself. It was time for the French to come. Colonel Archinard has done very wisely. When he came before our walls he respected the merchant

quarter, and bombarded only that Toucouleur citadel which is now your fort.

'I will not disguise from thee that, in spite of all we suffered from the Toucouleurs, the arrival of your people was disagreeable to us. The Toucouleurs were at least Mussulmans, and we were afraid of the dominion of the Christian. We had been told of many misdeeds committed by you. But now we are very satisfied. You allow us to make our prayers, and you do not despoil us as the Toucouleurs did, nor do you force impious practices upon us, and make us eat and drink unclean things, as we were told you would. When you have collected the tax you do not demand more, and you pay for all you want. We can resume our trades in safety and with greater profit, for the three tolls we had to pay upon the Niger before reaching Timbuctoo have been removed. This is why the former inhabitants are returning to us from all sides.'

THE CHIEF OF THE TOWN OF JENNE

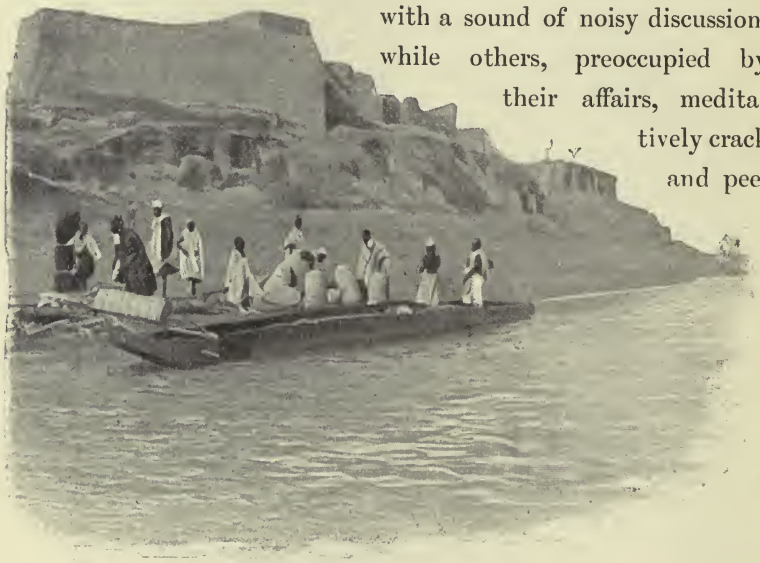
In fact, during my stay there many old houses became re-inhabited and new ones were built, and these latter afforded me the opportunity of observing those Songhoi methods of construction which had been brought from so far, and were so different from those I had hitherto noticed among the negroes. The general physiognomy of the town is not less striking. Its thresholds are no longer encumbered by sleepers and idlers, nor are its streets obstructed by loafers, as is the custom elsewhere. A bright energy and an unusual gaiety and elasticity of movement are astir in the town from early morning. The people hurry busily about, driving donkeys and carrying burdens, and all are working to attain some end. I must admit that all this

MARKET IN THE STREETS

energy is only relative. In Paris or London I should call it indolence, but in the Black Continent, under a blazing sun, it does

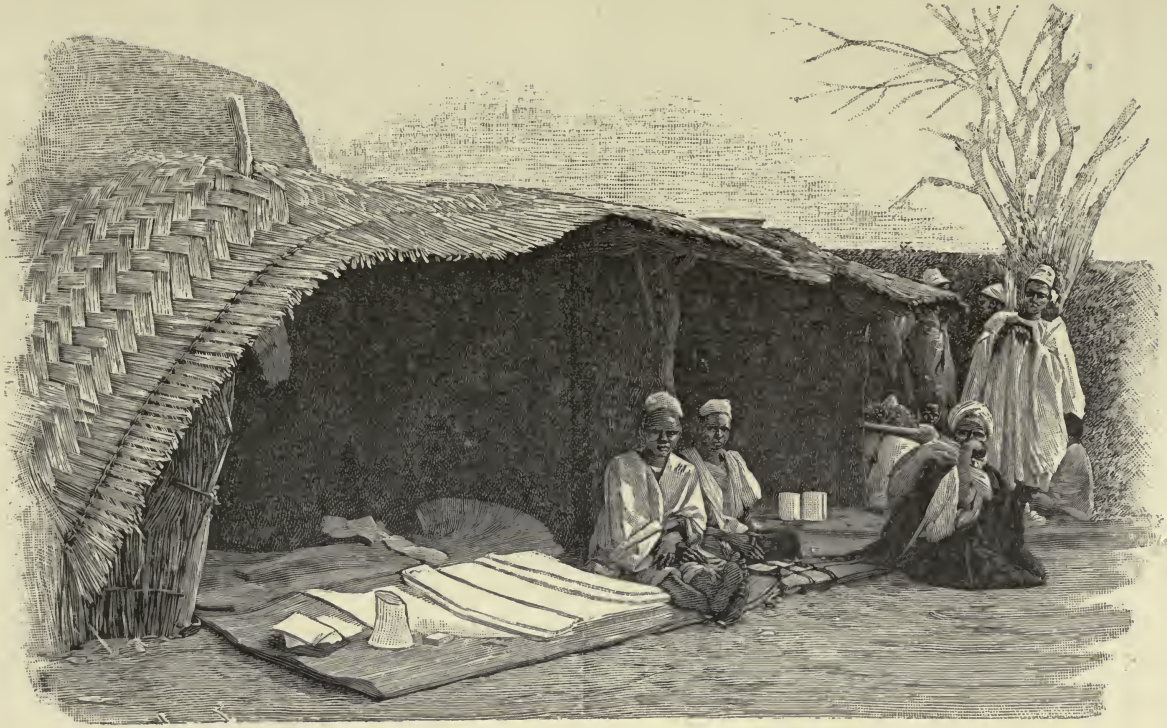
PRECINCTS OF THE DWELLINGS OF THE GREAT MERCHANTS

not do to be too particular. The precincts of the great merchant dwellings are particularly busy, their doors being literally besieged. A crowd of clients, in the Roman and commercial sense of the word, are awaiting their turn of audience. Some fill the streets with a sound of noisy discussion, while others, preoccupied by their affairs, meditatively crack and peel



THE COMMERCIAL HARBOUR

kola-nuts. Here and there in front of the eastern rampart, where the bank slopes gently to the commercial gate, slaves load and unload the vessels which are incessantly coming and going. At the four cross-roads you see low straw huts (the improvised stalls of the itinerant vendor) looking conspicuously out of harmony with the large houses. A few women keep a stall before their door; sometimes they leave their goods with piles of cowries beside them indicating the prices, while they themselves are busy about the house. Thus, instead of confining her trade to the market-place, as is the case in other towns, Jenne cries 'Commerce! commerce!' at every step of the way.



SHOPS OF ITINERANT MERCHANTS

The market does not present the accustomed haphazard appearance of its negro counterpart, with merchandise strewn about here, there, and everywhere. It occupies a large square in the centre of the town, and is regularly intersected with paths

WOMEN
SELLING IN THE STREETS

for the buyers and raised places for the sellers. Rows of shops border three of its sides, and the fourth opens upon the Mosque, as if in reminder that honesty and good faith should preside over all its transactions. Sitting surrounded by calabashes and potteries, the women sell vegetables, milk, fish, animal butter (salt or fresh), karita, spices, soap, and faggots of wood. There are three erections formed by square posts in the centre of the market-place, with a shop between every two posts, in which men sell the choicer goods—native and European textiles principally, with salt, kola-nuts, slippers, boxes of matches, mirrors, pearls,

knives, etc. The money-changer is stationed here also, with his black face showing out from between little mountains of cowries. For native gold (in rings like the moneys of the Pharaohs) and silver coins, varying from five-franc pieces to fifty centimes, he gives and takes hundreds and thousands of these little shells. Our gold pieces are not rated, because—well, because they are not very well known there just yet.

The butchers' shops are the most characteristic and picturesque of all. Dead shrubs, retaining only their principal branches, are planted before the posts, and the joints of meat are suspended from them, while live sheep await their turn of cutlets and chops. Primitive furnaces are established in their near neighbourhood, upon which you may roast your purchase free of charge, if you buy your fuel from the wood-seller next door. It is just like a London grill-room; but instead of the heavy atmosphere and

THE GREAT MARKET OF JENNE

gloom peculiar to the taverns of that city, there is the vast sky for ceiling, the brilliant sun for light, the bright and beautiful decoration of an ancient Egyptian town for background, and a

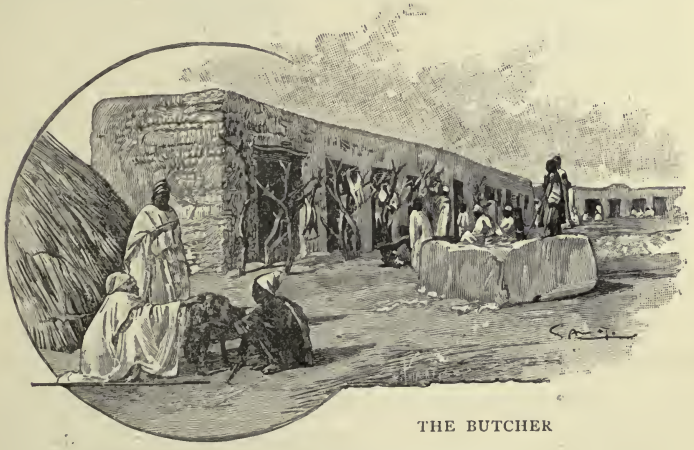
THE MONEY-CHANGER

crowd of people clothed in the white draperies of the Songhois for surroundings.

Islamism and Arabian civilisation have been superimposed and so firmly planted in these countries that a great many Egyptian manners and customs have disappeared. The embalming of the dead bodies of their celebrities (one of the most marked characteristics of the peoples of the Nile) is no longer practised. The Mohammedan religion considered the practice impious, but the custom survived among the Songhois for a long time, nevertheless. The old chronicles tell us concerning Ali the Conqueror: 'The king being dead, his children caused him to be opened and the entrails were taken out and replaced by honey, in order that the body should not become corrupt.' Unfortunately their docu-

ments do not shed as much light upon other subjects. Nothing recalls the ancient hieroglyphic or demotic characters. It is true that thin pieces of a very smooth wood are used instead of paper (which is expensive), to teach writing to the school-children. The Pharaohic scribes were wont to employ the same materials, in order to economise the more costly papyrus. The Arabic writing has entirely obliterated the other, as it has in Egypt, and, for that matter, as the Koran and Arabian jurist have effaced the native judicial customs.

But you have only to enter their houses, and penetrate their private life, to find in manners and customs many very characteristic indications of their origin. Their oral traditions, their chronicles, and their dwellings all betray their Nilotic fatherland. The Songhois resemble a palimpsest on which the



THE BUTCHER

first manuscript is dimly decipherable. Fragments are, and always will be, missing, but the omissions are those which it is easy to supply.

Among the favourite divinities of ancient Egypt, the crocodile

was especially dear to the priests of Thebes and Crocodilopolis, and the cult is still to be found at Jenne under a form naturally attenuated. The town and its environs are frequented by

CORNER OF THE MARKET

enormous green iguanas very similar to crocodiles. In Senegal and elsewhere the natives hunt this saurian for the sake of its flesh, which is very fine and delicate—so I am told. The people of Jenne, on the other hand, consider it sacred, and to kill it is to commit sacrilege. 'The Koran does not forbid its meat,' replied the marabuts to whom I reported this custom of the negroes, 'but we venerate the iguanas because our fathers did so.'

The dove, the oracular bird of the temple of Ammon, enjoys similar privileges at Jenne; nests and food are arranged for them in the houses, and they are never by any chance put upon the spit. The respect paid to the dove by these people is known of in Nigerian countries other than Songhoi, where they are called 'birds of Jenne.'

The same ready sweetness of disposition that has already been ascribed to the Egyptian races forms the psychological basis of the Songhoi character. The chronicler of the *Tarik*, a man of the Sudan but not of this race, has been struck by this. 'The characteristics of its inhabitants,' he says, 'are sympathy, kindness, and generosity.' They gave me an impression of that goodness and spirit of charity with which the old Egyptian papyri are so strongly imbued. The following was the happy altruism of the old Jenne merchant who said to me (explaining the system of their commission agents): 'We trust our merchandise to people who have no goods; they sell it for us throughout the country, and part of the profit is theirs. If they have the will they can become merchants in their turn.' And he concluded, 'It is a disgrace to beg here, for among us it is possible for every one

JENNE:
THE HAIRDRESSER

to earn a living. However poor he may be, a man has but to work to become rich.'

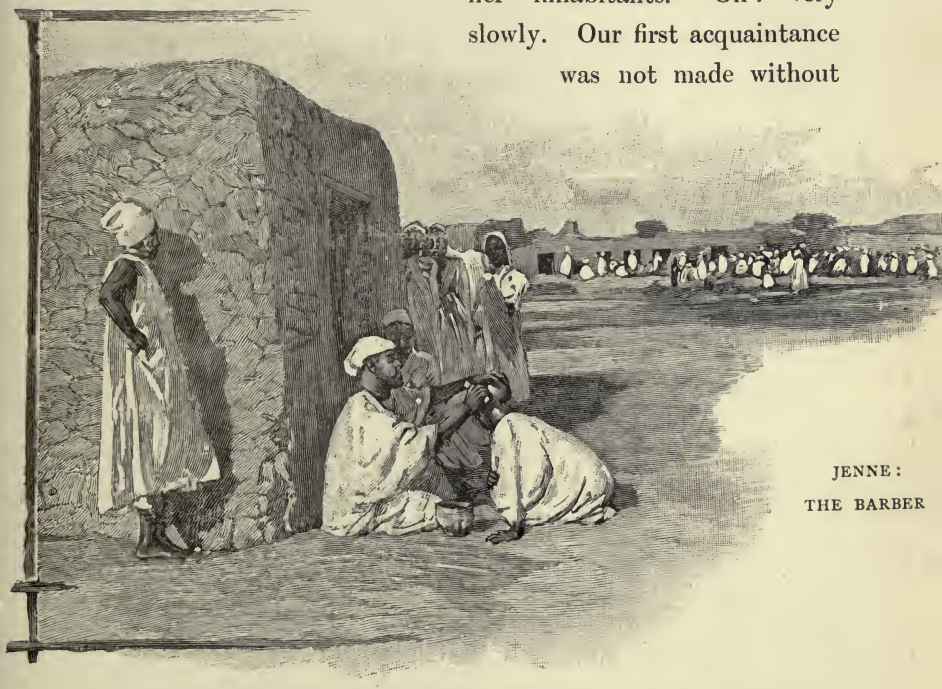
We will now pass to more commonplace comparisons. Contrary to Oriental and Arab usage, but conformably with ancient Egyptian custom, it is the men among the Songhois who weave the textiles, and not the women. The latter do the spinning and dyeing. Moreover, the Nigerian negro knows only one colour, the blue of his indigo, but the Songhoi uses black, yellow, and copper-red vegetable dyes. The ornamental motives employed are severely symmetrical, the most frequently used being that alternation of dark and light squares so often found in the hangings and draperies of the Egyptian frescoes. Among their finer tissues one deserves special attention ; it is a luxurious stuff, used for shawls or turbans, and woven with an uneven surface resembling our honeycombed towelling.

Among the artisans we can trace vestiges of a division into companies. Masons and blacksmiths alike are furnished by certain families, the trades descending from father to son. Both occupations recognise the supreme authority of one of their number, who takes his place among those personages of the town who deliberate and control public affairs. Masonry is man's work here, while in the negro countries it is the women who build the houses.

While Senegalese and Sudanese lean towards blue as the prevailing tint of their garments, the Songhois show a preference for white, like the Nubians ; and rice, not millet, is their staple food. Their kuss-kuss is not taken from calabashes, but is served in cups of baked clay similar in every point to those in the scenes of repast depicted upon the Egyptian tombs. The various forms of their numerous potteries also recall the antique specimens of the same land ; and they have real wooden bedsteads instead of the

lump of earth, covered with skins, that serves the negro as a place of repose. . . .

The last day at Jenne! I have been employed since morning in receiving processions of the friends I have slowly gained among her inhabitants. Oh! very slowly. Our first acquaintance was not made without



JENNE: THE BARBER

much hesitation, suspicion even. They could not understand this European, the first they had ever seen, who was neither soldier nor trader. My incessant and entirely unexpected questions bewildered them. They looked at one another and laughed as the interpreter transmitted them, and were obviously thinking, 'What absurd idea has the white man got into his head? What has all this got to do with him?' Then, hearing that their most learned marabut was reading the *Tarik* to me, and that I

gathered marabuts about me and blacked sheets of paper as I listened to them, they began to classify me accordingly and called me the 'marabut-toubab' (the white marabut), and the nick-name soon became popular. By-and-by I became a subject of much salutation in my walks abroad. The men greeted me in Arabian fashion, with the right hand placed first to the forehead and then to the heart; the women with a gracious movement of the left hand similar to the military salute. I did not deceive myself, however; these demonstrations merely expressed much compassion and indulgence for a harmless lunatic, an inoffensive imbecile, 'the man with the questions.' But when I could speak with some knowledge of their ancestors, their epopee, and their little anecdotes: 'Iho, iho' (ah, ah!), they triumphantly exclaimed, 'thou wilt write a Tarik for the whites about the blacks!' After this they lent me their books willingly enough, and opened their doors to me, even introducing me to the women's apartments. Thus the monomaniac became, bit by bit, more than a mere acquaintance, and an indulgent contempt was exchanged for a real affection. Their farewell visits (entirely unexpected) revealed this to me, and I discovered that I too had a feeling for some of them which was more than sympathy. They all brought some offering, a small souvenir, a few provisions, and little notes in Arabic, representing letters of introduction. Kindly wishes for the journey were mingled with affectionate questions: 'Would I come and see them again?' 'Should we talk together once more of Dialliaman, the impious Sunni Ali, and the unhappy old age of Askia the Great?' In order to justify my reputation of 'marabut-toubab,' I said to them: 'Yes, we shall all meet again. Not here, but in a country where there are neither blacks nor whites, in the land of Allah, where you will be white like me.' Whereat we all laughed together for the last time.

Towards the end of the afternoon, as the hour of the prayer that must be said at sunset approaches, they all withdraw, and I go up to the terrace of my house. From that height the town, the island, and the three channels that join to sever Jenne from the mainland, look as though drawn upon a map. After having pressed the hands of its friendly inhabitants, I wish to take a last look at this country which has so impressed itself upon my imagination.

The plain is scattered with white dots like daisies, but they are moving daisies, all possessed by the same motive and all drawn towards the town as to the sun. On the banks of the river the white dots collect in groups; they are the people hastening to their houses at the close of day, and waiting for the canoe ferry-boat to take them over the water. Dark spots now appear in the distance making for the same point; they are troops of horses returning from pasture. They wait for no ferry-boat, but precipitate themselves into the water that separates them from their stables. Finding no one waiting for them at the gates, they gallop through the town, joyously chasing, kicking, and nibbling each other. The streets are filled with a delightful uproar, cries, laughter, and swirling movements of voluminous white draperies as the foot-passengers start aside from the frolicsome animals. When the latter have had their play out, they go peaceably home in search of the masters who have given themselves no trouble to look for their beasts.

All sounds gradually die away in the town. A marabut has climbed to the terrace of the great mosque, and cries, 'God is great!' The surrounding terraces are peopled with white forms, which stand out against the summits of the palm-trees and the green of the baobab. Their backs are turned to the purple splendours of the dying light, for their faces look towards the

already darkened east, which is lighted for them by that eternal light in which Mecca is to be found.

The silence is harshly broken by a brazen sound; it is the bugle from the fort sounding the call for rations. . . .

The plain is now a vast desert, phantasmagorically illuminated. Above, the sky flames into every imaginable colour, and the channels, scarcely visible a moment ago, blaze into a reflection of the ardour of the sky, while the rows of ospreys upon their banks look like necklaces of pink pearls. Then all the enchantment is overwhelmed in the sudden darkness of a tropical night.

Farewell, my friends, whose lips are murmuring prayers unknown to mine! Farewell, strange island! Farewell, mother of Timbuctoo, thou Egyptian Jenne to whom I owe the unimaginable joy of having lived, at the end of the nineteenth century, in a city of the Pharaohs!

CHAPTER IX

FROM JENNE TO TIMBUCTOO

Re-installed in my yacht-canoe, I followed the accustomed path of the Niger in order to reach Timbuctoo. I hastened towards the mysterious city, hoping to find the sequel to that epoch of civilisation of which Jenne had accounted for the first half. I longed to raise completely the veil which has hidden the Sudan from us for so long, and caused us to look upon that country as the last refuge of barbarity, which was in reality an offshoot of the great Egyptian tree, the father of all western civilisation.

Tara, tara, Bosos! give way, my brave fellows! What a life that was during those seven days! We journeyed day and night, and I did not get two hours' consecutive sleep the whole time. To find one's way across the three deltas lying between Jenne and Timbuctoo is no easy task. I was obliged to navigate my little craft with compass in one hand and chart in the other, like a captain crossing the ocean. An ocean this country veritably is in January. When the floods are at their height, it becomes a region of navigable verdure, a labyrinth which extends a bewildering network of meandering tributaries, creeks, and channels along the course of the river. My imperfect chart and hastily recruited, inexperienced crew demanded an untiring vigilance. No moon! and the vague light of the stars only served to assist our digressions. One night in particular has left behind it the memory

A COMMERCIAL FLEET UPON THE NIGER

of an agonising nightmare. I was in the neighbourhood of El Oual Hadj, where two branches of the Niger, joining in one bed, form a small archipelago by their union. Entering this seed-plot of islands in the pitch darkness, I wandered about and up and down to such good purpose, that it was daylight before I succeeded in getting clear of them. The entire night was spent in wandering backwards and forwards in utter darkness. Every moment I thought I had at last found an opening, only to be confronted by another island. I seemed imprisoned in a labyrinth. . . . You know the anecdote of the tipsy man who guided his staggering steps by means of the railing of a monument, and ended by thinking he had been locked up? Allowing for an absence of wine and the presence of a great deal too much water, my sensations were precisely similar.

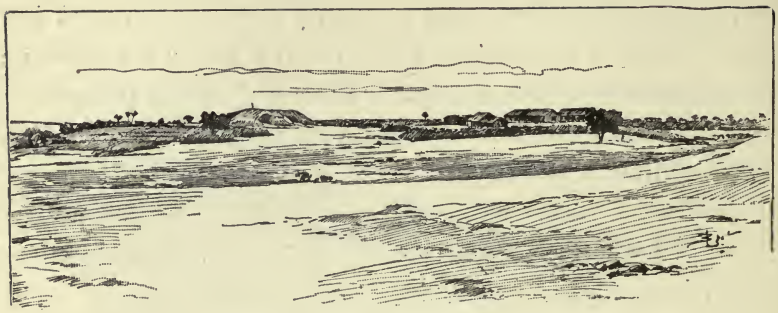
In seven days' time we had cleared the region of the deltas, an actual distance of three geographical degrees; but, what with its bends and windings, we had made at least 311 miles of it. In the course of these miles I had watched landscapes from Normandy and scenes from Syria unfold before my moving dwelling. I had seen the ports of Korienza, Sarafara, and Dara-Salam, which unite with Jenne in supplying the markets of Timbuctoo, and I had passed, and met, many of those delightful 'Jenne boats.' They were sometimes solitary, sometimes in fleets of ten or fourteen, according to the old-time custom, when numbers were their only protection against the pirates of the Niger. I enjoyed a picturesque glimpse of one of these little fleets one evening. The boats were anchored in the shelter of a small creek, and the crews were camping out round the great fires they had lighted on the banks; they reminded me of the Phœnicians trading and living thus upon the shores of the Mediterranean.

Only two fortifications are set up on our route, viz. Sarafara

and El Oual Hadj, both being so entirely different from any I had seen before that they deserve mention. It is only a year since we set foot in this region (lately the scene of Touareg pillage and exploitation), and it is easily understood that these posts (being valuable strategic points) are not simple centres of surveillance and administration, but have retained the character of forts. The gleam of bayonets is visible at some distance, and look-outs are posted on high places to keep watch on the horizon.

The military aspect of El Oual Hadj is particularly marked. It is a pioneers' outpost, and was entirely constructed by a half-company of Sudanese tirailleurs. On an artificial hillock, in a clearing in the midst of palm-trees, two rows of sheds are set up. The trees which were cut down to make the glade formed the sole materials used for their construction. One row contains the whites, officers and petty officers, and the other the blacks. The embankment is surrounded by a palisade, clumps of dead thorn are scattered about its slopes, while iron wires are stretched across to guard against surprise. It has no walls or loopholes, its very rough-and-ready intention being merely to guard against surprise, and to permit the discharge of volleys of firing. Do you care to know what the fort has cost the nation? The formidable sum of forty-nine francs fifteen centimes, inclusive of an admirable *mirador*, from which the look-out signals suspicious arrivals by water or land.

At some hundreds of feet from these fortifications, a solitary hillock rises from the banks of the river. It is obviously an artificial eminence, and here and there are found scattered about the bricks and stones which so puzzled Captain Philippe, the constructor of El Oual Hadj. The natives, upon being questioned, yield the information that several similar mounds are to be found on the left bank of the river, and a legend affirms that



THE FORT OF EL OUAL HADJ

they were the dwellings, now fallen into ruins, of the chiefs of old.

This is not my opinion. I believe them to represent the tombs, and not the palaces, of these same chiefs. El Bekri, an Arab who visited this country towards the middle of the eleventh century, describes their funerals in these words: 'Upon the death of a king these negroes construct a great wooden dome, which they set up in the place appointed to be his grave. They then arrange the body on a couch covered with stuffs and cushions, and set it inside the dome. Beside the dead they place his ornaments, arms, and the plates and cups from which he had eaten and drunken during his lifetime. Different kinds of food and beverages are also placed there, and they enclose with the monarch several of his cooks and the concoctors of royal drinks. The whole being covered with mats and cloths, the people assemble and throw earth upon the tomb until it forms a large hillock. These negroes sacrifice victims to their dead, and bring them intoxicating drinks as offerings.'

Unfortunately, I was not able to ascertain if these mounds still enclosed their ghastly remains. But better times are coming; and when the Touaregs are once more relegated to their real home, the

desert, I hope that among the commanders of El Oual Hadj one will be found of a sufficiently enterprising turn of mind to claim its secret from the little mound.

After Sarafara, in addition to its varied pictures, the river offers the further interest of the enaction of one of Nature's dramas—the struggle between the Niger and the Sahara, the battle of life against death. The rebuffs the giant river offers to the sand are plainly visible. The blows he has given are marked by patches of green meadows, stretches of cultivation, rice-fields and trees; those he has received shine and quiver in sandy whiteness under the brilliant sun. Across the vegetation the enemy traces now and again a path which dies abruptly on approaching the river-banks. The spectator is warned; the dominion of the waters is about to cease and the kingdom of the desert is at hand.

The Niger weakens as it draws nearer to Timbuctoo, and instead of pursuing its triumphant progress towards the north it gradually diverges to the east. The sands redouble their attack. Upon the left bank their masses grow in size and increase in numbers; and they follow the giant watchfully, approaching as they see his powers fail.

The last act of the drama takes place near Timbuctoo, where the Niger, finally resolved to yield the north to the desert, turns abruptly to the east and retires in the direction of Lake Chad. It is not a flight but a retreat, and he withdraws with all the honours of war, detaching a great arm to protect his rear. This arm, the Pool of Dai, offers a last resistance to the dunes. So valiantly does it defend the retreat of the river that we find it advancing into the midst of the sand, and its waters appear under the walls of Timbuctoo itself.

The kingdom of the sands is now our goal, for the famous town stands at its very gates. The river may pursue the dawn;

we will part from him here and direct our steps towards the Pool of Dai. This month of January marks the highest moment of flood, and the waters carry their weeds right up to the foot of the

dunes. A vast yellow-green expanse spreads to the distant fringe of trees that indicate *terra firma*. This border is abruptly broken as we advance, and a sandhill larger and whiter than any we have seen before is unmasked, dominating the horizon and arrogantly proclaiming the victory of the desert. It has reason to be proud, for directly behind it lies Timbuctoo.

Kabara, however, the landing-place and fort of Timbuctoo, is not there, but further away upon the horizon, where that round dark mass emerges. We make for it in a direct line, abandoning the pool to cut straight across the navigable green. As my boat advances, another sandy height appears beside the distant mass, and slowly defines itself into a square mass of walls. At one extremity a flag is floating (the fort, doubtless), and at the other, clearly cut against the sky, spread the sinister arms of a tall black cross. Below this strange apparition square earthen houses and round straw huts cover the sloping banks. It is Kabara.

THE ARRIVAL AT KABARA

We have now reached a basin of water in which a fleet of 'Jenne boats' are lying at anchor. The buzz of humanity rises from its large quay, and all the amusing bustle of a harbour reigns

THE QUAYS OF KABARA

there. In miniature certainly. The port of Timbuctoo is a mere toy in comparison with Havre or Marseilles, but the first impression is the same.

We are no sooner disembarked than my attention is arrested by two things which stay by me until my departure, viz. the sand and the Touaregs. The sand, because you have no sooner set your foot on shore than you flounder about in it as if it were a mire, and it pursues you everywhere, in the country, in the streets, and in the houses.

The Touaregs are impressed upon you, because, though you never see them, everything recalls them. You notice the un-

accustomed luxury of sentinels posted about the approaches to the fort, and that its usual garrison of infantry is supplemented by cavalry and several cannon. All are still on the alert, although a year has expired since our occupation. The stern lesson of the Bonnier disaster has been taken to heart, a lesson which has been recently enforced by the not less tragic episode of the massacre of the midshipman Aube, at a place some few miles distant from the fort. His gunboat was anchored at the foot of the green mound, and, being attacked by the veiled men of the desert, he allowed a rash pursuit of them to draw him into the midst of the sands. The foolhardy young man and his nineteen companions now lie on the crest of the hill under the great cross which stretches its arms towards the serenity of the sky.

Kabara, like Segu and Sansanding, suffered cruelly under the

KABARA: THE GRAVES OF THE AUBE EXPEDITION

prolonged anarchy which reigned in the valley of the Niger, and her misery was further aggravated by the exactions of the Touaregs. The town is in ruins, but for all that the dominant impression is

not one of poverty. The wretchedness of the town itself is overpowered by the life and movement it encloses. The quays are astir with lively bustle, and encumbered with bales, jars, and sacks in the process of loading or unloading. Boatmen and passengers economically camp out in parties everywhere.

ON THE QUAYS OF KABARA

Through the streets stream a perpetual coming and going of dock-labourers, donkeys and camels, convoys arriving from Timbuctoo in search of merchandise, and nomads from the desert bringing their cattle in exchange for fresh provisions. These two figures may help to give precision to the details: with twelve hundred settled inhabitants, the town contains a floating population of a thousand strangers.

Kabara is not the only port of Timbuctoo. She shares the honour with two others, being herself only able to play the part during a limited period (November to March) of each year. When the waters are at their maximum (in January) they encroach upon and follow the course of two depressions at the extremity of the dune of Kabara, passing behind it and penetrating some six or eight miles into the midst of the sands. One of these branches, the smallest, turns to the west and is navigable. It is called the Pool of Kabara, and they say that in years of unusual inundation

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(such as in 1894) large boats of thirty tons can go, by its means, right up to the gates of the town. Otherwise their cargoes have to be considerably lightened, but, for six weeks or so, canoe lighters ply regularly between Kabara and Timbuctoo by means of this pool.

The level of the Niger being considerably lowered in April, the great plain of navigable grass dries up and becomes a stretch of cultivation which reaches to the quays of Kabara; and the town, ceasing to be a harbour, becomes an agricultural centre.

From April to June the great boats stop at Dai, two and a half miles from Kabara, and canoes carry the cargoes between the two places by means of a small canal. Later on, in July, the vessels are stopped at Koriouma-Djitafa, situated upon the Niger itself at a distance of six miles from Kabara.

Timbuctoo has therefore three ports, the inconvenience of which did not fail to attract the attention of Askia the Great

when he concentrated his fleet at Kabara. He it was who cut the canal from Dai to Kabara, and at that time it probably assured the permanent circulation of lighters and made Kabara the sole port, Dai and Koriouma being relegated to the position of mere

places of trans-shipment. The canal has silted up now, however, and is useless at the fall of the river.

Timbuctoo is only separated from Kabara by five miles of overland route, and I could have reached the mysterious town a few hours after landing at its port. But I was in need of rest to restore my mental balance before I could quietly, sanely, and fully enjoy the sight of the town that I had travelled all these miles to behold. To see Timbuctoo! I had dreamed of it as a schoolboy, and now my dream was about to be realised. I determined to be epicurean, and rush into no rash gluttony. They tell me I can

THE FORT OF KABARA

see the town from the height of the fort, but I will not go. I wish to taste the first impression in its entirety, without destroying its bloom by a bird's-eye view.

One afternoon I bestride a first-rate mule, a regular walking arm-chair, and my traps augment the humps of several camels. Three o'clock. A bugle sounds, and the town shakes off its drowsi-

THE CONVOY

ness. A medley of people, donkeys and camels, stream towards the little parade in front of the fort, while from it emerges a picket of twenty tirailleurs with rifles on their shoulders.

It is the hour of departure for the daily convoy. These few five miles of road are not to be traversed at will, as are the three hundred separating Kayes from the Niger. We are obliged to travel under escort here, for, short as it is, the road is not safe. You divine the reason? Touaregs—always. Only ten days ago these brigands attacked some solitary travellers, and duly pillaged and killed them.

'To the front for the Sahara!' The crowd for Timbuctoo advances. Each one carries or drives something. Children worry unfortunate little asses, which are so loaded that only their ears are visible, and they look for all the world like walking bundles. Men armed with spears and guns accompany the camels, and women, placidly smoking their long pipes, are perched upon

small donkeys, with their screaming progeny on the crupper. The whole thing has less the effect of a caravan than of the

THE DWARF FOREST

emigration of an armed people carrying the very uttermost of their household goods with them.

The borders of the desert were a surprise to me, for I had fully expected to find them a sudden expanse of bare, shining sand. Nature's moods are not so abrupt, however ; she prepares a transition. We are in the midst of hot, soft sand certainly, but it is not bare. Only the road, or rather track, is of the expected shining whiteness. The rest is covered with a peculiar vegetation which is neither wood nor thicket. It is a dwarf forest containing a rickety growth of scrubby palms, mimosas, and gum acacias. They are a pale, dusty colour, an anæmic green, with such trivial branches and leaves that the shade they give is anæmic too, the phantom shade of a phantom forest.

The watercourse which we meet and meet again, and yet a

third time, is equally unexpected. Water in the desert! It is the Pool of Kabara on its devious way to Timbuctoo. God be praised, they have not yet made a bridge across it. Imagine the Sahara with bridges! The water cuts straight across the track, and escort and escorted have to ford it, to the great joy of the spectator.

The water is fully breast high. The tirailleurs carefully remove their uniforms, and the men take off their ample draperies; so do the women, but they imperturbably retain their pipes. They carry their most precious possessions, arms, clothes, and goods, on their heads. It is now the turn of the animals, and the donkeys make the most ridiculous scenes. As soon as the water has so shallowed that swimming is unnecessary, they sit down in it, apparently bent on suicide. Indescribable barbarities now take place. Men, women, and children fling themselves upon an unfortunate animal. One seizes it by the ears, another by the legs, and a great many by the tail (the lever *par excellence* on these occasions). The animal calmly allows itself to be drawn to the bank, while its zealous rescuers charge into the absent-minded, and cause many an involuntary bath.

FORDING THE STREAM ON THE WAY TO TIMBUCTOO

I pictured a party of Touaregs arriving in the midst of this hubbub. Right and left of the track the undulating ground and scrubby thicket could well mask a surprise, and equally well cover a retreat, the attack being once made.

The road half-way between Kabara and Timbuctoo bears a sinister reputation. The natives have given it the tragic name 'Our' Oumaira' (They hear not), meaning that neither at Timbuctoo nor Kabara can the cries of the victims be heard. The

'OUR' OUMAIRA'

place has bitter memories for us also. A cross, sister to the one that gloomily dominates Kabara, is set up in one of these valleys.

A little leather placard is nailed to it, bearing the following inscription :—

After reading this inscription one casts suspicious glances right and left into the undulating and woody landscape. A little prudence is decidedly advisable. This preoccupation is so increased by the uproar of the picturesque medley of people crowding round the escort like chickens round a hen, that the thought of the approaching vision of the town is forgotten.

At a given moment, however, the mass gathered round the escort opens out, the track rises to climb a bare dune, and when we have followed it to the top—Timbuctoo is spread before our eyes.

DISTANT VIEW

CHAPTER X

TIMBUCTOO [1]

An immense and brilliant sky, and an immense and brilliant stretch of land, with the grand outlines of a town uniting the two. A dark silhouette, large and long, an image of grandeur in immensity,—thus appeared the Queen of the Sudan.

Across the space everything looks simple and severe; the

[1] The native pronunciation is more nearly represented by the orthography Tomboutou.

OF TIMBUCTOO

forest is dwarfed out of sight, and nothing diminishes the vast landscape, which is lighted by the throbbing glare of the veritable sun of the desert.

Truly she is enthroned upon the horizon with the majesty of a queen. She is indeed the city of imagination, the Timbuctoo of European legend.

Her sandy approaches are strewn with bones and carcasses that have been disinterred by wild beasts, the remains of the camels, horses, and donkeys that have fallen down and died in the last stages of the journey. The cities of the East are invariably encircled by their bones, and the roads across the desert are lined by their bodies.

The details of the distant shape grow clearer by degrees. The

illusion of walls, produced by the distinctness with which the town stands out from the white sand, disappears, and three towers, placed at regular intervals, dominate the mass. The terraces of

A STREET AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE TOWN

square houses are now distinguishable, giving an appearance of depth to the outlined mass, and renewing the first impression of grandeur.

Whether you approach from the banks of the Niger, from the shores of the Atlantic, by the Moroccan and Arawan routes, or from the coasts of the Mediterranean by Tripoli or Ghadames, the

town presents the same outlines: fine, long and deep, and evoking the same impression of grandeur in immensity.

We have entered the town, and, as behind the scenes of a theatre, behold! all the grandeur has suddenly disappeared.

It is another scene now, equally impressive, but on account of its tragic character rather than its beauty. Instead of finding the compact and well-ordered city which was promised us by the exterior, we enter a town that seems to have recently passed through the successive dramas of siege, capture, and destruction.

The foreground, to which the play of sun and shadow had given the distant effect of city ramparts, proves to be a mass of deserted houses. The roofs have fallen in, the doors are gone, the walls are broken and crumbling, and have become mere heaps of ruin. Piles of earth, bricks, and bits of wood are scattered over the open spaces which were once the paths leading to these defunct dwellings.

Beyond these ruins behold the market, or rather one of the markets. This is the largest of them, I am told, and I begin to hope that the sinister impression left by the entrance to the town will now be removed.

The place is spacious, certainly, but is this the great market of Timbuctoo? These women with little baskets, little calabashes, and little round mats, selling insignificant little things, red, green, white, drab, and black, spices and vegetables, for infinitely little sums of cowries, just as in any, no matter what, little market in no matter what little town of the Sudan. Is this the universal commerce of Timbuctoo? Why, if I only recall the market of Jenne, this is the most miserable in the world. And I, who thought to find here a pendant to the great fairs of yester-

TIMBUCTOO: THE GREAT MARKET

day or those of Nijni Novgorod of to-day! I, who expected to see heaps and heaps of the produce of Arabian Africa, Negraic Africa, and Europe!

Instead of obliterating the image of these ruins, this spectacle bites it in more deeply. What is passing here? what has passed here? I ask myself in disconcerted bewilderment. The houses round the market-place have the appearance of being able to stand, certainly, and are even inhabited, but, O my beautiful dwellings of Jenne, how far away you seem! Where are your imposing forms and harmonious outlines? You would appear monumental now. Here are merely houses of a kind, things without character, height, or style. Just four walls and a flat roof. If this mediocrity were only pleasingly clean! But their unburnt bricks are worn, crumbling, and cracked, under the combined effects of rain, wind, and sun. Any attempt to keep them repaired was given up long ago. They seem to have been deserted for years and inhabited again quite recently. The bizarre appearance of their enclosing walls seems to confirm this hypothesis, for the breaches in them have been hastily stopped with carelessly adjusted mats, bundles of straw, and fagots of brushwood.

The further we advance the more the misery increases, and all traces of the majestic exterior disappear. Only the sky is the same, brilliant and immense.

Let us follow the road that buries itself in the heart of the town. The buildings bordering it are rather higher here; they even have an additional story. But indulgent as I am inclined to be, I cannot deny that they also are threatened with ruin, and that neglect is written on their walls in cracks and crevices. Their second stories are still further advanced in disintegration, and the bars of the little Moorish windows have fallen away.

Only the doors and thresholds show any sign of care and habitation. The former are curious, being very massive, garnished

A LARGE HOUSE

with a profusion of enormous-headed nails, and bound with iron like a safe. They are all carefully shut, too, contrary to the custom of negro countries.

Beyond this road (a comparatively sound spot), the leprous patches reappear, and vague bits of ground (the sites of houses which have been deserted or destroyed), mingle with poor hovels enclosed by a heterogeneous collection of brushwood, mats, and walls. The general wretchedness is occasionally varied by groups of straw huts with fences of matting. They are clusters of nomad Foulbe dwellings in the midst of the *débris* of the town.

In spite of certain vague imaginings, I had not expected to find an Athens, Rome, or Cairo here; but straw huts! not many of them, certainly, but—in the very heart of the town.

Here and there I pass a few healthy islands of tall houses with

studded doors close shut; then, more ruins. One of the latter arrests my attention. Although it is a lamentable wreck, with ceiling and roof hanging from a lacework of walls, its great size indicates some dwelling of importance. A public building perhaps. Who lived here? It proved to be no ordinary house, for the man who dwelt there was known all over Europe, all over the world, and the Queen of England corresponded with him. A man whom the learned and the explorers of every country held in pious memory, Barth's host and protector, Sheik el Backay, lived here. Its crumbling walls have no other roof than the sky. The family of one of his servants vegetates in a little corner of the courtyard, into which some seedlings of the cotton-plant have thrust their way. This is all that remains of the once brilliant life that held sway there.

THE STRAW HUTS, WITH STRAW ENCLOSURES

From one extremity of the town to the other the same story is repeated of roads ill and dying. You sink in their sands as if you

were in the midst of the desert. A city in deliquescence, such is the town which the sun had shown from afar as so majestically great.

Have I been the sport of a mirage? The spectacle was so unexpected and absorbing that I had hitherto paid no heed to the life and movement stirring among these ruins, and had not noticed their contrast with the fading town. But tall blue-and-white forms are energetically stirring about the city, and strings of heavily laden camels, donkeys, and porters encumber the roads. I scarcely notice that all the idioms of the Sahara, Sudan, and elsewhere, from the Mediterranean and the Atlantic to Lake Chad, are to be heard here. I do not distinguish, under white turban or red fez, all the different types of the negro races, — Arab, Berber, Songhoi, Mossi, Bambara, Toucouleur, Malinka, among the blacks; and Foulbes, Moors, Touaregs, and Tripolitans among the whites. This human amalgam is miserably clad, and their untidy, ragged, and dirty coats are so completely in harmony with their back-

TIMBUCTOO: A STREET

ground, that one confounds them with the ruins. The obstinately closed doors would lead you to imagine that all these passers-by are strangers to the town.

TIMBUCTOO: A CORNER OF THE TOWN

The impression is so profound that sight and judgment are deceived, overthrown. It is not only the illusion of the distant view, the vanished mirage, which embitters the deception, it is the destruction of all that glamour which surrounded the name of Timbuctoo in the mind of the European. The disillusion is complete, for I know that the town has not been besieged, pillaged, bombarded, nor destroyed since it was occupied by our troops. Our flag was planted there some months back without

a shot being fired. The town is precisely what it was before we entered her.

And this is the great Timbuctoo, the metropolis of the Sudan and the Sahara, with its boasted wealth and commerce. This is Timbuctoo the holy, the learned, that light of the Niger, of which it was written, 'We shall one day correct the texts of our Greek and Latin classics by the manuscripts which are preserved there.' And I have not even seen one of the open-air schools which were so numerous at Jenne.

These ruins, this rubbish, this wreck of a town, is this the secret of Timbuctoo the Mysterious?

You can imagine my perplexity when it became time to think of a lodging. My first thought was naturally to settle in the road and pitch my tent in one of its empty spaces,—at a respectful and prudent distance from these falling houses, be it understood. My servant, however, an old Senegalese tirailleur, who had fought against Samory, and who was afraid of nothing, set out in quest of an abode while I continued to explore the town. 'I have found a house,' he cried on his return, and radiantly led me towards one that was in every respect as deliquescent as the rest.

To my great surprise, however, the inside did not harmonise with its exterior. It was no palace, but it was fresh and clean, and in good condition, truly regal in contrast with the outside sights. I decided upon it at once, and found the habitation comprised two rooms, a vestibule, and an ante-room to a court, which was about as large as a couple of linen sheets. Three rooms (the apartments proper) opened from these. A passage led to a court of vague locality somewhere at the back, and a little staircase gave access to the roof. The whole was let for twenty-five francs a month.

The camels grunting at the door were immediately unloaded, and I contemplated my traps with emotion. A moment ago I thought there was not a whole thing in Timbuctoo,—in the world even. The sight of my packages dispelled this nightmare. In a regular fever I insisted upon unpacking them myself. I set up the camp-bedstead, my table and folding-chair, my pots and pans, my tub and my toothbrush, and then I contemplated them all with a childish joy, not unmixed with tears, for all these things were not cracked, crumbling, and falling into ruins.

Next morning I sent round the letters of recommendation provided by my friends in Jenne. The little pieces of paper were filled with warm words, and very soon rows of slippers on the threshold of my dwelling announced the presence of numerous visitors within. My house was filled with welcoming presents, eggs, dates, ostrich-plumes, hens, chickens, and sheep. I was compelled to sacrifice the latter, as pasturage was not included in the twenty-five francs a month, but the poultry were installed in the court at the back. For the first time in my life I had a poultry-yard, and I experienced all the deliciously childish and countrified sensations of 'fetching the eggs myself.'

I responded to the graciousness of my new friends with stuffs, Mussulman chaplets, tea, sugar, and perfumes. The letters of introduction had instructed them concerning the object of my visit, and having learned wisdom from my experience at Jenne, I hastened to explain my purpose still further. They were assiduous in their attentions, and constantly brought me new visitors, whose acquaintance they thought might be useful to me. A charming life now began for me in the house I had entered with so much distrust.

In the penumbra of the little court, which was partly covered

by a verandah, and still further defended by a large awning against the ardour of the Saharian sun, I held meetings night and morning. My visitors sat crouched upon their heels, while

MY COURTYARD AT TIMBUCTOO

I occupied the solitary chair, with a little table and some blank paper before me. The picture recalled certain glimpses of the Mosque University of El Azhar at Cairo. It was a class, in fact, with the proportions reversed, the professors being the many and the pupil the one. The deliberate and picturesque phraseology of the Oriental flowed on unceasingly, recitations being succeeded by readings from the old chronicles of Timbuctoo.

There was nothing pedantic nor affected about our gatherings; each member related his memories at random, and passed from subject to subject with every imaginable ease. Tea, coffee, cigarettes, and kola nuts circulated at intervals. The neighbours' pigeons and 'my hens' made an occasional irruption, but

with discretion. Chaffinches with red throats and tails, and the lively little lizards who shared the apartments with me, joined the party. They frolicked in our midst with the utmost effrontery. The lizards ran about all over my guests, and the birds flew round them, fluttering and singing incessantly. No one but myself took any notice of them, however, so accustomed is Timbuctoo to their numbers and caprices.

For several days I did not stir out of my house; my life was so full I had no leisure to do so. Yet so pleasantly active and varied was it that I was content to remain in, and gradually,

without having set foot in the street, a new Timbuctoo was built up before me. The wretched spectacle which had greeted me on my arrival, and which I had believed ineffaceable, disappeared bit by bit. A secret had clearly hovered over Timbuctoo the Mysterious. I had the eyes that saw; and at last the image of the great city, the wealthy Timbuctoo of the legends, was restored to me.

CHAPTER XI

TIMBUCTOO ACROSS THE CENTURIES

In order to understand Jenne, we referred to the history of the countries east of the Niger, and found there a vein of Egyptian civilisation; the origin of Timbuctoo, however, must be sought in a different direction, for her past is connected with the Arabian civilisation of northern Africa.

This same northern Africa was the world of the Berbers, and included all those white people whom we have known under the names of Touaregs in the Sahara, Kabyles in Algeria, Moors in Morocco and Senegal, and Foulbes in their infiltrations into the Sudan. Misled by their previous condition, we erroneously believed them to have been nomads from all eternity; but, like the Jews, circumstances alone caused them to adopt a wandering life, and in reality they represent the autochthonous populations of Mediterranean Africa, of Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, and Tripoli. Ibn Chaldoun, their great historian, observes: 'All northern Africa, as far as the country of the blacks, has been inhabited by Berber races since an epoch of which we know neither its anterior events nor its commencement.' These races lived on the coasts of Africa, and cultivated the beautiful valleys of Tell long before the arrival of the Phœnician and Roman colonists. Carthage and Rome set the Berbers in motion by crowding and pressing them

back into the interior, and they it was who transformed them into a nomadic people.

Originally the Berbers of Morocco, that is to say the Moors,

MOORS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF TIMBUCTOO

were the last to suffer. The ancient colonisation, most intense in Algeria and Tunis, was less direct in its effects on Morocco, which was not entirely divested of its inhabitants by the arrival of the colonists. Half its population, following the coasts of the Atlantic, wandered towards the country of the blacks, while the other half maintained themselves side by side with the new-comers. This portion remained fairly stationary and compact until the Arabian invasion. Moors and Arabs then combined to conquer Spain, where for three centuries they enjoyed the hospitality offered them by Europe. It is well known what

valuable services their polished manners and beautiful art, their cultured literature and advanced industries, rendered to the cause of Western renaissance.

What became of these brilliant people, we ask, when they were driven out of Spain? Returning to Morocco to find their ancient patrimony in the hands of the Arabs, and being forced to prolong their exodus into the south, they followed the Atlantic

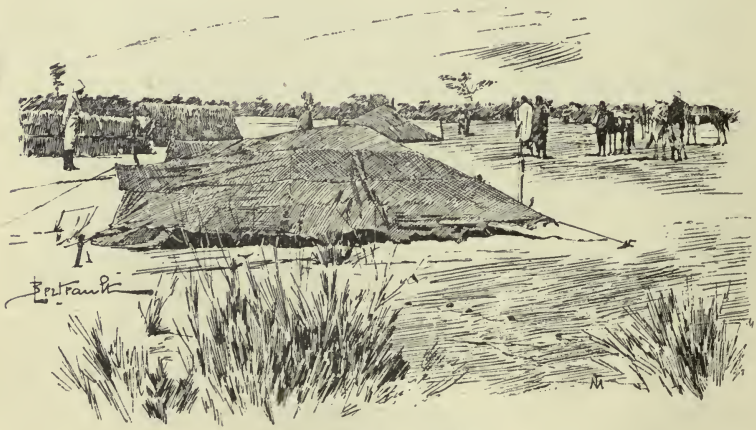
MOORISH WOMEN

coasts and the negro countries and became nomads in their turn. These Spanish Moors, wandering about the great lakes on the left bank of the Niger in the neighbourhood of Oualata and

Timbuctoo, carried with them a name which leaves us in no doubt as to their origin. They are called Andalusians to this day.

As we shall see later, these Moors, at the epoch of their return, became one of the prime factors in Timbuctoo's greatness. The wonderful architects and the sumptuous possessors of the palaces and mosques of Seville, Granada, and Cordova dwell to-day in leathern tents, and the sands of the Sahara are their only place of prayer. The vicissitudes of nomadic life have sadly deteriorated them from the exalted civilisation to which they had attained. Herds of goats and humped oxen, flocks of sheep, and a few horses and books, form their sole wealth. The delicate ornamentation of leather, their embroidered wallets, cushions, and gun-cases, with some jewellery work, are all that recall the characteristic manner of the art they introduced into Europe.

Let us now see what became of the Berbers of Algeria and Tunis, countries in which the action of the Ancients was more



MOORISH ENCAMPMENT

brutal. A small number, thrown back beyond the Atlas Mountains, found a land capable of maintaining them in the mountains

and valleys of Kabyle, and there they have remained, stationary and impregnable, through all these centuries.

SCHOOL IN A MOORISH ENCAMPMENT

The greater part of them must have taken the roads of the Sahara, at that time in the possession of the black races. Its vast sands were more habitable and fertile then than they are now, for it was the inexperience of these new-comers, their excessive clearings, and the ravages of their herds, which diminished the already parsimonious gifts of Nature to the desert.

This exile forced a new existence upon them which, little by little, transformed the whole race ; the place, and everything they found there, obliging them to adopt a special life, manners, and even costume. We have called this portion of the Berber people Touaregs, a name of Arabian origin, which they completely ignore, only recognising the titles of Aoulemidens, Tenguaragifs, Taddamakets, Hoggars, Azers, and Airs, the patronymics of their principal tribes.

The rearing of horses, oxen, and goats is their chief industry, the milk and flesh of these animals furnishing, with the addition of dates, their principal nourishment. Agriculture is scarcely

possible under a sky from which the rain does not fall for six or eight consecutive years.

Owing to their eyes not being accustomed to the terrible glare of this desert, nor their lungs to its sand-storms, they adopted a head-dress of two veils. One, the *nicab*, is rolled round the temples, hanging down in front to protect their eyes; the other, the *litham*, reaches from the nostrils to the edge of their clothing, completely covering the lower part of the face. Hygiene was obviously the only motive of this mysterious accoutrement, which set the savants seeking all manner of far-fetched origins with which to endow these Touaregs. This is proved not only by their own statements, but also by the sobriquet 'mouths for flies,' which they give to all who do not wear this costume. The veils are never removed, even at meal-times, and the garb has

MOORISH FLOCKS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF TIMBUCTOO

become so much a part of them that 'any one being deprived of it is unrecognisable to his friends and relatives. If one of their number is killed in battle and divested of his veil, no one can identify him until it has been restored to its place.' And

this in spite of the fact that the bridge of the nose and the eyes alone are visible.

The scarcity of water and their speedy exhaustion of the scanty pasturage of the desert kept them perpetually on the march. With this constant movement any aggregation of their life was impossible; every social and political organisation disappeared, and they gradually lost all notion of law and authority. Like the Jews, and all people thrown out of their natural paths, their souls and brains became steeped in vice, and it was not long before they had become the mere prey of their instincts. Their nomadic life soon reduced them to the level of vagabonds, thieves, and brigands, and the only law they recognised was the right of the strongest.

TOUAREG WITH 'NICAB' AND 'LITHAM'

Theft was their natural industry—a branch of education, in fact—and they augmented the meagreness of their herds by extorting ransoms from some of their neighbours and completely despoiling others. Travellers and merchants were their principal victims, but when these failed they robbed and killed each other; for, so far

TOUAREGS AND THEIR FLOCKS

from their tribes being united, they were divided by the most bitter and persistent hatreds.

They adopted a vague form of Islamism which they reduced to a belief in talismans. Since no morality, Mohammedan or otherwise, found foothold among them, they soon became characterised by the worst vices, only retaining the one quality of physical endurance. Thieves and murderers when in sufficient numbers, they are the most obsequious of beggars when convinced of their weakness, and are, in either case, absolutely faithless. A Sudanese proverb says, 'The word of a Touareg, like water fallen on the sand, is never to be found again.' They have nobles, serfs, and slaves among them, but nobility none; if you wish to find any quality other than vanity and pride, you must look for it among their negro slaves. Neither age nor womanhood inspires them with either pity or respect. Bloodthirsty and cruel as they are, they do not even possess that unlimited courage which forms the redeeming characteristic of the *condottieri*. Their valour is displayed at night during the sleep of their victims or adversaries. Ruse is their principal weapon, even though they never show themselves without a spear in their hand, a sword at their side, and a poignard attached to the left arm. The Sudanese have bestowed upon them three epithets which epitomise their psychology: 'Thieves, Hyenas, and the Abandoned of God.'

Yet it is to these people, who have become the most useless and nefarious on the face of the earth, that Timbuctoo owes its origin.

Towards the fifth century of the Hegira (1100 of our era) a Touareg tribe, the Maksara,[1] established its herds between the

[1] The Markassighi of to-day, settled to the east of Timbuctoo, and forming part of the Tenguaragif family.

town of Arawan in the Sahara and the little village of Amtagh,[1] situated on the banks of the Niger.

During the summer and dry season they pastured their flocks on the shores of the river, returning to the desert for the winter floods. In one of their many wanderings they noticed an oasis in the midst of the sands, formed by an overflow of the Niger. It was a narrow depression, having somewhat the appearance of a river, and must have been fairly deep, since the hippopotamus found his way there, and was a place in which the Touaregs could always be sure of finding some vegetation, as well as abundant and excellent water.

The situation was an admirable one for man and beast, and, with the palm-trees which reared their elegant forms there, did not lack a certain charm of aspect. They established a fixed camp on this spot in order to prevent its occupation by others during their absence. They cut down bushes of thorny mimosa from the neighbouring thickets, and formed, according to their custom, a *sanié*, or enclosure, to keep out the wild animals of the desert—lions, panthers, and hyænas. Straw huts were built behind this shelter, in which the Touaregs placed their provisions and other cumbersome properties. They left some Bailas, or slaves, there, who kept guard under the superintendence of an old woman called 'Tomboutou' (The mother with the large navel).

The sobriquet became popular in the country, and contributed to the speedy renown of the advantages of their encampment. 'Travellers paused there,' says the *Tarik é Sudan*. 'The populations increased by the power and will of God, and the people began to build themselves fixed dwellings. Caravans coming from the north and east (Algeria and Tripoli) on their way to the

[1] The Hamtagal of to-day, to the south-west of Timbuctoo.

A POOL AT THE GATES OF TIMBUCTOO

Mali kingdom delayed at the camp to renew their stores. A market was soon formed; a high enclosure of matting was substituted for the barrier of dead thorns, and it became a meeting-place for people travelling by canoe or camel.'

The place did not deserve the name of town, however, until the merchants of Jenne (which had been a city for some three hundred years) settled there. The tradition which I have just mentioned concerning the origin of the town was confirmed in Timbuctoo. 'The Touaregs are the fathers of the town,' my friends told me. 'When thou wert little, what didst thou call her who nourished thee at her breast? Thou calledst her mother, didst thou not? Well, Jenne is the mother of Timbuctoo, for it was she who made it live and grow; and it was she who, by bringing hither her merchandise, caused it to become a great place of commerce.'

The merchants of Jenne taught Timbuctoo to build houses of baked brick, and to replace the *sanié* of mats by a low earthen wall. They also built a mosque, afterwards the Cathedral Mosque of Ghingaraber; and a wealthy woman, a native of Sokolo, erected a second temple, which became later the University Mosque of Sankoré. Thus enlarged, Timbuctoo entered into competition with Oualata.[1] The latter town was the great cosmopolitan market of western Africa in the twelfth century. 'It was with Oualata that the caravans traded, and it was there the most pious, learned, and wealthy men lived. They went thither from all countries and all tribes, from Egypt, Fezzara, Soussa, Tuat, Tafilalet, Ghadames, Ouargla, and Fez.' This active and intelligent population, which was strongly imbued with the Arabian civilisation, could not fail to make acquaint-

[1] Called Ganata and Gana by the Arabs in the ancient texts, and Birou by the Songhois.

ance with Timbuctoo and the many advantages of its position. The numerous conquests of the Mali kings, however, which disturbed western Africa in the thirteenth century, diverted the caravans little by little from Oualata. Its merchants and scholars emigrated to the new city, and were supplemented there by a fraction of the great Moorish tribe of Senhadia. By the fourteenth century Oualata had become entirely eclipsed, and the splendours of Timbuctoo had grown from her ruins.

The Touaregs, who still pursued the wandering life of the desert, contented themselves with nominating a governor of the town who levied taxes in their name. They augmented their demand in proportion to the increasing prosperity of the town, until inhabitants and caravans alike were forced to pay veritable ransoms. Becoming, not unnaturally, weary of this, the people invited Koukour Moussa, whose kingdom of Mali was then at its height, to take possession of the town. He, being just returned from the conquest of the Songhois and a pilgrimage to Mecca, entered Timbuctoo in 1330. He presented the Cathedral Mosque with a minaret of pyramidal form, built himself a palace, and installed a governor there upon his departure. The dominion of the Malinkas did not open very happily, however. The cupidity of the people of Mossi had already been excited by the renown of Timbuctoo, and their sultan now appeared before its gates at the head of a large army. The new masters of the town took flight, while the enemy pillaged and burned. When the Sultan of Mossi and his army withdrew, laden with spoils, the people of Mali repossessed themselves of Timbuctoo, and remained its masters for a hundred years (1337-1434).

The young city arose once more from its ruins, and Timbuctoo expanded as the kingdom of Mali declined. 'The original masters of the town did not fail to take advantage of the deterioration of

their rivals. The Maksara Touaregs pillaged the outskirts of the town, and the Malinkas were afraid to offer any resistance. Akil, the chief of the Touaregs, sent a message to them at last, saying, 'If you cannot defend Timbuctoo, cease to occupy it.' Whereupon the people of Mali retired.

The nomads now reigned for forty years, committing the grossest excesses. They proved themselves tyrants and oppressors, accumulating exactions, hunting people from their dwellings, and violating the women; and for the second time the town was forced to seek a new master.

Oumar, its governor, having been wronged by his own people (the Touaregs), secretly resolved upon revenge. With this intention he sent a messenger to Sunni Ali, giving information concerning Akil and the Touaregs, exposing their weakness, and promising to deliver up the town. The messenger took Oumar's sandals with him as a guarantee of good faith. Sunni Ali, who was at that time (middle of the fifteenth century) laying the foundations of the Songhoi empire, accepted the invitation. At the appearance of his cavalry on the river-bank opposite the dune of Amtagh, Akil resolved on flight. He departed, followed by his people and a great number of the learned men of Sankoré, to seek refuge in Oualata. Sunni Ali was furious at the exodus of marabuts, and suspecting the remainder of being the friends and accomplices of the Touaregs, he heaped every imaginable ill-treatment upon them. Did he show himself equally cruel towards the remainder of the inhabitants? In spite of the old chronicles, I do not believe he did, for the reasons I have given in the history of the Songhois.

The year 1496, the year of the capture of Timbuctoo by Sunni Ali, is an important one in the history of that city. For the

future she forms part of the Songhoi empire, steadily keeping pace with the progress of the latter, until she becomes Timbuctoo the Great, the city of universal renown, the fabled Queen of the Sudan.

More than a century of tranquillity now lies before her, the century of Askia the Great. Owing to his wise creation of a standing army, his great era of war had no disturbing influence upon the Sudan. The well-regulated and powerful organisation which, with their viceroys and governors, he bestowed upon the conquered territories, soon brought them under control.

The immense kingdom of the Songhois now extended over the desert from Thegazza to Agades, and the conquered Touaregs renounced their brigandage to become docile auxiliaries in the hands of Askia. The routes of the desert were perfectly secure, and the caravans came and went with an activity hitherto unknown.

This security, spreading north and south of Timbuctoo, was not the only element of her prosperity, but was seconded by the organisation and inspection of her markets, the unification of weights and measures, and the stern suppression of all falsifications. Timbuctoo, more than any other town in the Sudan, profited by the measures and victories of Askia the Great.

The city had now doubled its extent. Its houses were well built, and arranged in orderly streets. The ancient mosques had been restored and new ones built. A great emigration of Songhois reinforced the Jennereans, counterbalancing the Arabian and Berber elements, which had hitherto predominated. The dialects of Jenne and Gao became its current speech, Arabic remaining the medium of communication with strangers and the language of science. The university of Sankoré was at the height

of its prosperity, the fame of its professors being known not only in the black countries but throughout Arabian Africa itself. Learned strangers flocked hither from Morocco, Tunis, and Egypt. The civilisation of Arabia clasped hands with the civilisation of Egypt, and from their union resulted the apogee of Timbuctoo (1494-1591).

Such was her splendour that our imaginations are still dazzled by its reflections, three centuries after the setting of her star. So great was her glory that, in spite of all the vicissitudes she has suffered, her vitality is not yet extinguished.

The decadence of Timbuctoo began with the Moorish conquest in 1591. The powerful links forged by Askia the Great being once snapped, the whole of western Africa was shaken. While the last of the Askias was fighting for national independence on the eastern shores of the Niger, Jenne revolted in the west, her example being followed by the Touaregs, Foulbes, and Malinkase. The north and south were thrown into confusion, and Timbuctoo, their intermediary, seeing her commerce mutilated, rebelled in her turn. She was brutally repressed by the conquerors, and the flower of her scholars exiled to Morocco (1594). A terrible dearth, provoked by the lack of rain, visited the town, and her inhabitants were reduced to 'eating the corpses of animals, and even of men.' This was followed by the pestilence in 1618.

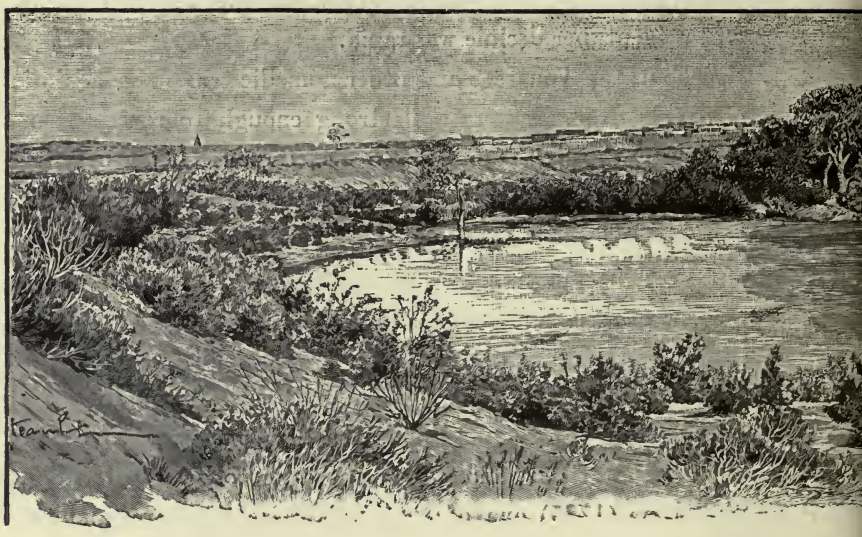
When the Sudan had once more regained tranquillity, Timbuctoo, by reason of her proximity to the Moorish frontier, had become the capital of her conquerors. The rivalries of the Roumas reigned within her walls, their pashas disputing the supreme power, and their troops settling their differences in the streets. The town was the constant scene of some panic, and

from the moment the disorganisation of the Moorish colony became evident, her decline was rapid.

Without, the Touaregs and other nomadic tribes rose again in revolt. The Roumas were still strong enough to repress them, but one can imagine the disastrous effect these riots had upon the trade of the town. Within, the rivalries of the Moorish chiefs grew more and more bitter. The competitors for the title of Pasha pillaged and otherwise ill-treated the inhabitants of the town. The population divided, and took sides with this, that, or the other aspirant. Barricades were raised, fighting went on in the streets, and the poor pillaged the wealthy. In 1716 one of these revolutions lasted four months. No one went to market during all that time, 'and the grass began to grow there.' At another time (1735) one of the rivals seized Kabara, and prevented the vessels unloading their merchandise and despatching it to Timbuctoo.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the town was depopulated, and that the caravans grew fewer and further between. Touaregs, Berbers, and Foulbes added to the general confusion. They began by disturbing the outskirts of the town, and it became necessary to place patrols on the road to Kabara in order to protect the merchants trading with Timbuctoo. The resistance of the Roumas grew slowly weaker, and in 1770 the veiled men had become strong enough to invest the town for three months. The Roumas, incapable of enforcing peace, bought it. 'They paid the Touaregs a tribute of eighteen of the best horses of the town, twelve hundred garments, and seven thousand mitkals of gold.'

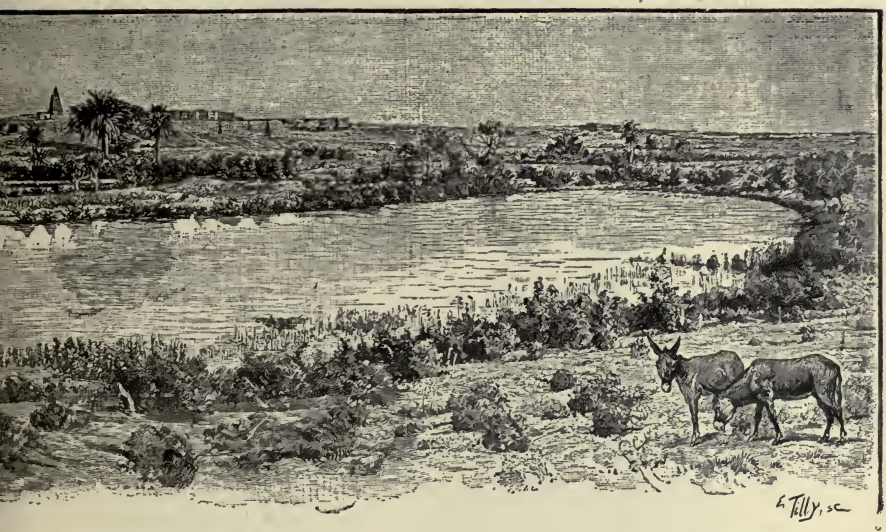
The nomads spread freely over the banks and valley of the Niger, pillaging the vessels making for Kabara, and thus injuring, even at a distance, the trade of Timbuctoo.



PANORAMA OF

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the city had relapsed into the same state as that preceding its conquest by Sunni Ali. The Roumas had become the mere representatives of the Touaregs, governing and imposing taxes in their name. Straw huts increased in numbers, and the new quarters at the north of the city, which had been built in the time of Askia, were completely deserted, the houses falling into ruins. As its decline became more accentuated the town diminished in extent until it had shrunk to its dimensions of the sixteenth century.

Timbuctoo was re-delivered from the hands of the Touaregs in 1827. Cheikou Ahmadou, the Foulbean leader, made successful war against the nomads, and took possession of the town. But the Touaregs, grown aggressive, wearied out his successor, who agreed, for the sake of peace, to pay them a third of the taxes levied upon the city. This understanding lasted until El Hadj Omar destroyed the power of the Foulbes in 1861.



TIMBUCTOO

The most critical period of her history now opened for Timbuctoo. The roads of the Sudan and desert alike had never been less safe, nor had her commerce ever encountered such difficulties, all security having disappeared in the town itself.

If Timbuctoo was now without a master, she was in the possession of a thousand tyrants. Touaregs, Tenguaragifs and Irregenaten divided her among themselves and adorned her with the tragic and sordid attire which now clothes the Queen of the Sudan.

That time has been described to me in the following words: 'Thou hast seen those veiled men in sombre garments, with chest and back covered with red and yellow talismans as though by cuirasses. When they come to us now they are modest, but before the French arrived they walked insolently through the streets, carrying iron spears. Every year we paid them tribute in gold or kind, corn, salt, garments, and turbans, etc. Their chiefs with

their retinues were well lodged when they came here. The caravans bound for this town paid them toll in the desert, and they exacted toll upon the river also, from the fleets going to Kabara.

This did not suffice them; these were the least of our evils. From one end of the year to the other they treated us as captives of war, as slaves. They were constantly arriving in groups and dispersing through the town. All doors were closed as soon as they appeared, but they beat upon the doors, and thou canst see the traces of the heavy blows from their lances everywhere. We were forced to open to them, and without paying the least attention to the master of the house or his family, they would install themselves in the best rooms, taking all the cushions and couches, insolently demanding food and drink, and insisting upon having sugar, honey, and meat.

On departing to rejoin their camp the only acknowledgment they made was to steal something from the house and spit upon their host.

'If they alighted upon some man too poor to satisfy their exactions, they vented their ill-humour by destroying his belongings, and any attempt at resistance was met by their raised spear. If they arrived at midnight, accommodation must be found and a repast prepared for them.

'They took possession of anything that pleased them in the markets. All the shops and sellers of stuffs and garments had people posted about the town to give notice of their appearance, and every one barricaded their doors. They robbed the passers-by in the streets. If they met a man wearing a beautifully embroidered robe or a new garment, or even only a clean one, they instantly despoiled him of it. They snatched the golden ornaments, coral necklaces, and adornments of glass beads from the women, and plundered children and slaves in the same manner.

'The schools were formerly held in front of the houses of the masters, and our children played in the streets as in other parts of the Sudan. But the Touaregs used to seize them and carry them off, and only restored them to us upon the payment of heavy ransoms. If a man whom they suspected of being rich had hidden all his valuables, they would leave some small thing behind on quitting his house, and then would return in numbers, crying out that they had been robbed, and the man would be forced to pay an indemnity.'

These narratives would be interrupted by sundry resigned '*Imsh Allah!*' (May God's will be done). 'But why did you not unite against your enemies?' I asked them. 'Oh, if we resisted them it was still worse. One day some Touaregs met a young

man returning from the market with some meat he had bought. They took his purchase from him, and when the young man resisted, the Abandoned of God killed him with their spears. All for a piece of meat! At another time a woman who was alone in a house was ill-treated by one of them. Her cries attracted her brother, who mortally wounded the Touareg in his wrath. The avenger immediately fled and sought refuge in Sarafara, but he was forced to return, and the veiled men cut his throat as they would a sheep's.

'We could not prevail against them, because we are merchants and not fighters. And if we had subdued them in the town they would still have remained our masters, because they controlled the routes of the caravans and the road to Kabara. They could have ruined us and left us to die of hunger whenever they liked.

'Strangers sometimes gave these hyænas a lesson. Four or five years ago a caravan from the south, composed of three hundred of the men of Mossi, was staying in the town. One of them, wearing a beautiful new turban, encountered a Touareg, who snatched it from his head and ran away. But the people of Mossi are active and brave, and this man gave chase to the thief and overpowered him. Other Touaregs, however, came up and rescued their companion.

'The man of Mossi ran to the chief of the caravan, who said, "Beat the alarum of the people of Mossi upon the tom-toms." His people, armed with spears and bows and arrows, came running to answer the summons. Their chief distributed honey-dolo, and they set out to find the Touaregs. The principal personages of Timbuctoo sought to prevent the conflict. "No!" replied the chief, "we are strangers here and your sacred guests. We have been injured, and we will avenge ourselves or die." The kaid of the town offered to give them a similar turban. "No," said the

chief of the Mossi, "it is the Touaregs who have stolen it, and it is they who must make amends." They were only to be appeased on hearing that the Touaregs had prudently quitted the town.'

Such was the existence of Timbuctoo during the last thirty-five years. One can imagine the disastrous results such a state of

A THOROUGHFARE IN TIMBUCTOO

affairs was bound to produce in the long-run. Finding themselves thus molested, the strangers who ventured there gradually lessened in numbers. Weary of living in a constant state of alarm, and of submitting to exactions to which they saw no end, the people began to emigrate. The strangers who had settled in the city returned to their native country. Natives who had relations in the neighbouring countries joined them there. The deserted houses cracked, their walls crumbled and fell to pieces, forming

the unexpected and inexplicable heaps of ruins which greeted me on my arrival.

The poorest and wealthiest alone remained faithful to the city. The first, living in straw huts, possessed nothing, and consequently had nothing to lose. The second, the opulent merchants, could, owing to their great fortunes, manage to endure these annoyances, and the emigration of the smaller traders, moreover, permitted them to augment their business, and therefore their profits.

No one ever gets accustomed to pillage and ill-treatment however, whatever the compensations may be; and to avoid being robbed in the open street, and seeing their houses turned upside down, the inhabitants adopted a new manner of living. They transformed their garments and dwellings, and ceasing to be Timbuctoo the Great, they became Timbuctoo the Mysterious.

Instead of the imposing white turbans of the natives and the beautiful dark ones (made of shining tissues) of the Moors, the people cover their heads with unappetising rags, or cheap caps. Shabby old shoes are substituted for the yellow Turkish slippers of the women and the silk embroidered, soft, red leather boots of the men. The caftans and the ample garments of dazzling whiteness, the beautifully embroidered vestments, the fringed and ornamented *Dissas* (thrown over the shoulder as the toreador wears his cloak), have all disappeared. They wear instead old scanty clothes, whose dirtiness, being their sole adornment, offers no temptation to the Touaregs. In place of the long cane, ornamented with leather or chased iron, on which the Sudanese loves to support his fine form, they use a plain stick of a cheap white wood. Their one idea being to avoid any sign of affluence which might attract the attention of their oppressors.

On the few occasions of their going out, the women attire themselves in the coarsest stuffs, and take off all their gold and

amber ornaments, and the slaves, before going to fetch water at the town gates, hide their modest jewellery. The children are kept inside the courts, and the schoolmaster holds his classes within his house.

The houses are disguised like their owners, and, to escape the visits of the veiled men, all appearance of wealth and prosperity is avoided. I will not assert that they are voluntarily defaced, but time and weather are allowed to work their will upon them unhindered. The tornadoes of winter have been permitted to wash away the rough-casting and expose the baked bricks of the façades; the walls of their terraces have crumbled, and the little

SUDANESE WEARING THE 'DISSA'

Moorish windows fallen away. In front of the houses, the banks of earth (tim-tims) on which the well-to-do were wont to pass their hours of leisure have entirely disappeared.

By these means the town very soon acquired a tumble-down

and battered appearance. Everything seems to be falling into the streets, except the doors—those obstinately closed doors that had so astonished me on my arrival. They are the objects of the most

TIMBUCTOO: A CORNER OF THE TOWN

studied care, and are set up regardless of cost. Heavy planks of a very hard wood are brought from a distance for this purpose, and are adorned with armour like any gentleman of Agincourt. Thus barricaded, the inhabitants, under cover of a simulated misery, live the silent life of the cloisters. They have given up grinding their kuss-kuss in the great wooden mortars common to the Sudan, and now crush the grain between two stones and pound

it without noise, for the sound of the heavy pestle would inevitably attract some marauding Touareg in search of a meal. If a knocking on the door is heard, the whole household, hastily concealing its valuables, assumes the silence of death. The unfamiliar visitor has to loudly recite his names, his recommendations, and the purpose of his visit. If his discourse is judged satisfactory, and it is decided to show some sign of life, there are still questions to be asked and answered before the door is finally opened.

The same mystery naturally attends all business transactions; a moment must be snatched when all Touaregs are known to be at some distance, otherwise it is necessary to wait until nightfall.

I was initiated into the secret of Timbuctoo, and her disastrous appearance was explained to me. With my narrators for guides I explored the same streets and houses that I had seen on my arrival. The armoured doors were opened for me, and there lay revealed all that these tumble-down old places concealed. I was seized with admiration both for the splendour of Timbuctoo's past and her ingenuity and tenacity of to-day.

CHAPTER XII

THE COMMERCE AND LIFE OF TIMBUCTOO

'Timbuctoo is the meeting-place of all who travel by camel or canoe.'

This simple dictum of an old Sudanese chronicle excellently expresses the commercial greatness of the city; the 'canoe' representing the south of Timbuctoo (the Sudan) and the 'camel' indicating the Sahara and the whole of northern Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Tuat, Tunis, Tripoli, and, finally, Europe.

An intermediary of exchange between north and south having become essential, Timbuctoo supplies the part, and serves to unite

the Berber and Arab with the Negraic world. This task is marvellously facilitated by her unique situation. Placed as she is at the outlet of a labyrinth of tributaries, creeks, and channels, at the point where the Niger bends abruptly from the western to its eastern course, she offers an easy point of concentration to north and south. Here the Sudan can assemble her many different products, and satisfy all her clients of the north at the same time. Timbuctoo is like a port with bonded docks situated on the coast of an opulent continent, with a sea of sand stretching before her upon which the fleets of the desert come and go.

The commerce of the desert and the organisation of its caravans were established by the Moorish and Arabian tribes who dwelt on the confines of the desert. The country in which they pitched their tents permits of no cultivation, but favours the rearing of innumerable camels, and the nomads offer the native merchants the hire of these useful animals[1] in exchange for cereals and clothing.

A CARAVAN

[1] The hire of a camel plying between Morocco and Timbuctoo costs from forty to fifty francs, and merchants usually employ from thirty to forty of these animals.

On account of its proximity and its former conquest of the city, Morocco has become the principal client of Timbuctoo, Tendouf, Souara, Marrakesh, Fez, and Tafilalet being the points of departure of its caravans. Algeria is only of secondary importance, as its relations with the city are indirect, being established by means of Tuat; in the same manner Tunis and Tripoli trade through Ghadames. The caravans from the coast are chiefly laden with European stuffs, the principal fabric being the indigo blue cotton called Guinea, which is imported all over Africa. It is worth from fourteen to twenty-five francs the length in Timbuctoo, and only seven in Senegal. White calico is also in great request, and a few silks are numbered among the more luxurious textiles. In a general way the odd medley of patterns and colours which are in such demand upon the coast are despised in Nigerian Africa, their place being taken by more sober designs of Arabian character.

Other articles of commerce are firearms, gunpowder, cutlery, paper (sold on the Niger at twenty-five or thirty centimes a sheet), scissors, needles, mirrors, silk, and seed pearls (for embroidery), amber, coral, large pearls for necklaces, spices (principally cloves), sugar, tea, coffee, perfumes, tobacco from Tuat, teapots, cups, snuff-boxes, dates, carpets, fez, burnouses, caftans, etc.

The camels are only partly loaded on starting, for half-way the caravans complete their freights with that unique article, salt. I have laid stress upon the primary importance of this product in former chapters, and it only remains for me to show how it is procured.

The long depression in the western Sahara bearing the name of El Djouf is a vast mine of rock salt. We have seen that the supply first came out of Thegazza, and that these mines were

abandoned in the sixteenth century for those of Taoudenni, situated nearer Timbuctoo.

Little accustomed as they are to smiling pastures, Taoudenni, according to the people of the desert, is one of the dreariest spots on the face of the earth, possessing neither trees nor vegetation, while the little water that is to be found there is salt. Shade, and water fit to drink, must be sought at the wells of Oued Teli, distant a day's journey. Not even earth for the construction of dwellings is to be found, houses and mosques being built of rock salt and roofed with camel skins. The inhabitants of the town subsist upon the dates the caravans bring on their way to Timbuctoo, and the cereals and other provisions they leave behind on their return.

A BLOCK OF SALT

Under a thin covering of sand the mineral is found in clearly marked layers. It is dug out in large lumps by slaves, and trimmed down to blocks (about 3 ft. 7 in. by 1 ft. 3 in.), looking like bars of red or grey-veined marble, and which, as they come out of the mine, are stamped with the trade-marks of the different contractors. They are worth from two to six francs,

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF

according to their quality, and a camel can carry four or five at a time.

Before entering the Negraic countries they undergo a regular toilet at Timbuctoo, where they are embellished with geometrical

designs in black paint, and the name of some venerated chief is written on them in Arabic characters. Sidi Yaia, the patron of Timbuctoo, Abd' el Kader, the great Algerian chief, Cheikou Ahmadou, El Hadj Omar, etc., are honoured in this fashion. Thus ornamented, they are bound round with thongs of raw leather, which are arranged to hold the fragments together in cases of fracture. The fact that the manufacture of these thongs occupies an entire branch of business from one end of

the year to another will give some idea of the importance of her salt trade to Timbuctoo.

The densest and whitest blocks are the most in demand, those veined with red being of an inferior quality. Their price in Timbuctoo varies according to the greater or less security of the Sudanese routes. 'There was a time,' said the old men, 'when these blocks cost only from five to ten francs'; but during my sojourn there thirty or forty francs more nearly represented the price paid for them. An exporter from Jenne and Sansanding will purchase five hundred blocks at a time. Bought at thirty francs, for example, and worth forty-five at Sarafara and double at Jenne, they represent about seventy or eighty francs

RETAILING SALT

apiece at San or Sansanding, increasing in value at the same rate until they reach Mossi and the regions of Lake Chad. With such voyages in prospect the advantage these bars of

salt possess over our powdered substance is sufficiently obvious. Hard as stone, and proof against injury from moisture, they do not suffer from the loss and theft to which our sacks of salt are peculiarly liable. The seller retails them in small pieces proportioned to the demand. They often serve the traveller as a means of barter, for the Sudanese who declines to sell his provisions for cowries, silver, or even gold, will never refuse a small lump of salt.

Having completed its freight at Taoudenni, and paid one or several tolls to the Touaregs, the caravan reaches Timbuctoo, if it has not been entirely pillaged by the way. It does not enter the town, which would be seriously encumbered by its multitude of camels, but encamps before the northern walls in the *Abaradiou*, or caravan suburb. This quarter consists of groups of straw cabins surrounded by thorny fences, which recall the early settlement of Touaregs that gave birth to the city of Timbuctoo.

The merchants accompanying the caravans lodge in the town, but the camel-drivers find shelter in the Abaradiou. The camels are watered at large pools lying near, and are pastured on the neighbouring dunes, where the sober-minded animals

find the camel-grass and other miserable and thorny vegetation which form their chief delicacies.

As one would suppose, the number and importance of the caravans vary in direct relation with the security of the Sahara on the one side and the prosperity of the Sudan on the other. The large caravans include from six hundred to a thousand camels and from three to five hundred men, their freight representing from six hundred thousand to a million francs'-worth of goods. They generally arrive from December to January and from July to August. Smaller caravans of sixty or a hundred camels are arriving all the year round, the town annually receiving about fifty or sixty thousand camels. In the year following our occupation (evidently an abnormal one) the official returns only stated fourteen thousand camels.

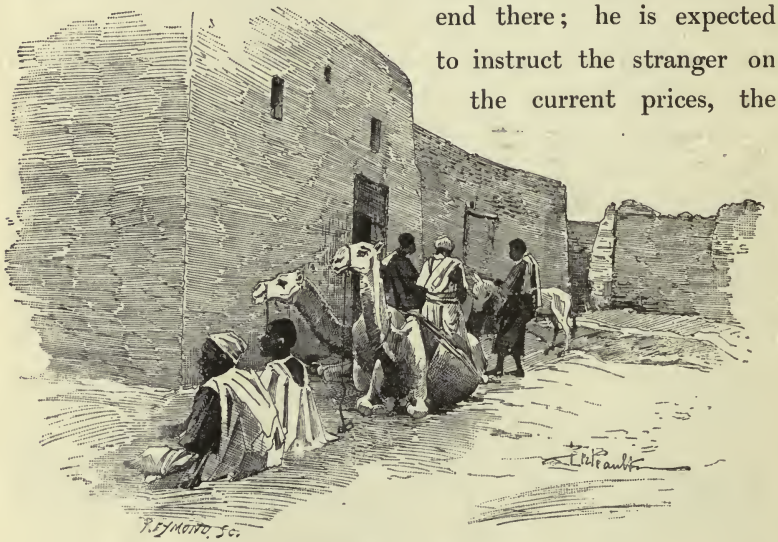
Like the burdens of the camels, the cargoes of the fleets comprise two distinct parts. One portion, destined for Timbuctoo and the towns and nomadic tribes of the Sahara, consists principally of matters of alimentation, such as millet, rice, karita, manioc, arachides, honey, kola nuts, neta and baobab flour, monkey-bread, tamarinds, onions and tobacco (cheaper and inferior to that of Tuat), dried fish, and in addition, soap, iron, antimony, cotton, straw hats, potteries, and calabashes. The other is specially allotted to Morocco, Tuat, and Ghadames, and comprises gold, ivory, ostrich plumes, raw leather, wax, incense, civet musk, indigo, gum, etc., and includes a few slaves.

The different methods of northern and southern transport being now explained, the commerce of Timbuctoo appears in all its simplicity. The camels transfer their burdens to the canoes, and the vessels confide their cargoes to the camels, Timbuctoo being

THE PORT OF TIMBUCTOO

the place of trans-shipment. The city is merely a temporary *dépôt*, situated between the borders of the desert and the copiously watered valleys of the south, and is so completely a town of warehouses and docks that none of its merchants possesses either camel or boat. What part, then, do its people play if they are neither exporters nor importers? They are brokers, contractors, and landlords. 'The guest is a present from God,' says an Arabian maxim much in vogue in Timbuctoo, where there are no caravansaries. The inhabitant offers gratuitous board and lodging to the stranger merchant for the first three

days, and interprets the noble precept in a disinterested and elevated manner. There is a perfectly straightforward understanding that at parting on the fourth day the guest shall hire one of his host's houses (some own as many as ten or fifteen) for the remainder of his stay. These dwellings are similar to the one I occupied, and are large enough to serve as warehouse as well as habitation. Moreover, the part of *diatigui* or landlord does not end there; he is expected to instruct the stranger on the current prices, the



UNLOADING CAMELS

abundance or scarcity of the product he has come to buy or sell, the standing of any client who may offer himself, and also to assist his guest in making his purchases, the price of lodging thus including the benefits of brokerage.

I too made use of my landlord according to custom, asking him to advise me in the choice of tradespeople, and appealing to him in all my business transactions. I requested him to conduct me about the town as though I were some merchant of Mossi or Tafilalet, and he led me through the markets and

showed me the interior of those crumbling wrecks of houses which had so deceived me on my arrival. To my great surprise I found well-provided shops under these ruins, stored with the most varied fabrics from all parts of Europe and the Sudan, and containing every description of native product. We pursued the same dilapidated road I had followed on the first day. Under the low roof of a hut, open to the four winds, we found a tailor and his nine workmen, whose needles were flying through blue-and-white stuffs, while an old greybeard in spectacles read verses of the Koran to them through his nose. Some were making pantaloons and the ample robes of the Sudan, while others were ornamenting them with elaborate Moorish embroideries. These embroidered robes (Timbuctoo's chief industry) were notorious at the time of the Sudan's greatest prosperity, and her workshops could barely keep pace with the demand for them. They were exported to Morocco, Bammaku, and Gao, and cost from three to four thousand francs apiece. They are marvels of taste and delicate workmanship, with roses and arabesques on the back and front, embroidered in shining silken threads that stand out in brilliant whiteness from the raw silk of the fabric.

Shoemakers formerly employed a similar art upon the wonderful leather of the country, the true marocco, fine, supple, and light, which is made into boots embellished with green and yellow embroideries, and into slippers, cushions, and bindings. We directed our steps towards a cracked and dilapidated house, whose upper story had fallen into fragments. It was the abode of a great merchant, and before its closed and barricaded door my guide recited the accustomed discourse; in spite of the several months of our occupation, the old habits of precaution have not entirely disappeared. Having passed the second armoured door, we found ourselves in a courtyard shaded by a large verandah,

whose arched galleries ran round its four sides, like the *patio* of Spanish houses. Out in the streets the heat was terrific, but this court was agreeably cool, with no trace of the external misery and ruin. Everything was marvellously clean and well kept, and after the *Lasciate ogni speranza* of the exterior it seemed a paradise.

Carpets and cushions were scattered about under the galleries, for this court is the reception-room, and it is here that all business is transacted. A panther skin was offered me for seat, and we were served with tea and sugar and the delicious dates of Tuat.

THE GARDENS OF TIMBUCTOO

After that we visited the shop, which ran across the entire house, and in which sacks of millet were heaped upon sacks of rice, and blocks of salt were to be counted by the hundreds. Bales of dates lay side by side with packets of ostrich feathers and elephant tusks. This house, outwardly a ruin, contained about fifty thousand francs'-worth of merchandise.

Side by side with these unofficial are the official brokers or *taifa*, who specialise in certain products, such as salt, gold,

cattle and textiles. They go from house to house, offering their services, showing samples, and explaining prices. On asking the number of the specialists, I am told, 'There are about three hundred who carry on the profession from father to son, but all, even the women and children, are brokers in Timbuctoo.'

If he is provided with the necessary capital, and sees the moment to be propitious, the native of Timbuctoo is not above speculating on his own account, and his operations are very similar to those of our Bourse. At certain periods of the year, when the great caravans are expected, the rich merchants buy up all the chief articles of commerce, salt, cereals and textiles, thus causing an artificial rise in price, which they maintain until their agent signals the approach of caravan or fleet. They also buy large quantities of karita, kola nuts, onions, and other stores, which are sold by children and slaves in the markets and streets.

Falsification and fraud, as well as speculation, have long been known and practised in Timbuctoo. An old writing of the time of Askia the Great devotes several pages to the denunciation of false weights and measures, the admixture of copper with virgin gold, the aëration of meat, and the baptism of milk, etc.

It is sufficiently obvious that the great firms of Morocco, Tuat, and Ghadames would, like Jenne and Sansanding, seek to relieve themselves of the onerous intervention of the native broker. All these towns, in fact, possessed property in Timbuctoo, and their representative, a relative or confidential slave, was installed there, the heads of the firm paying an annual visit in order to verify accounts and control the inventory. Occasionally the merchants of north and south would establish themselves in the city, returning to their native country as soon

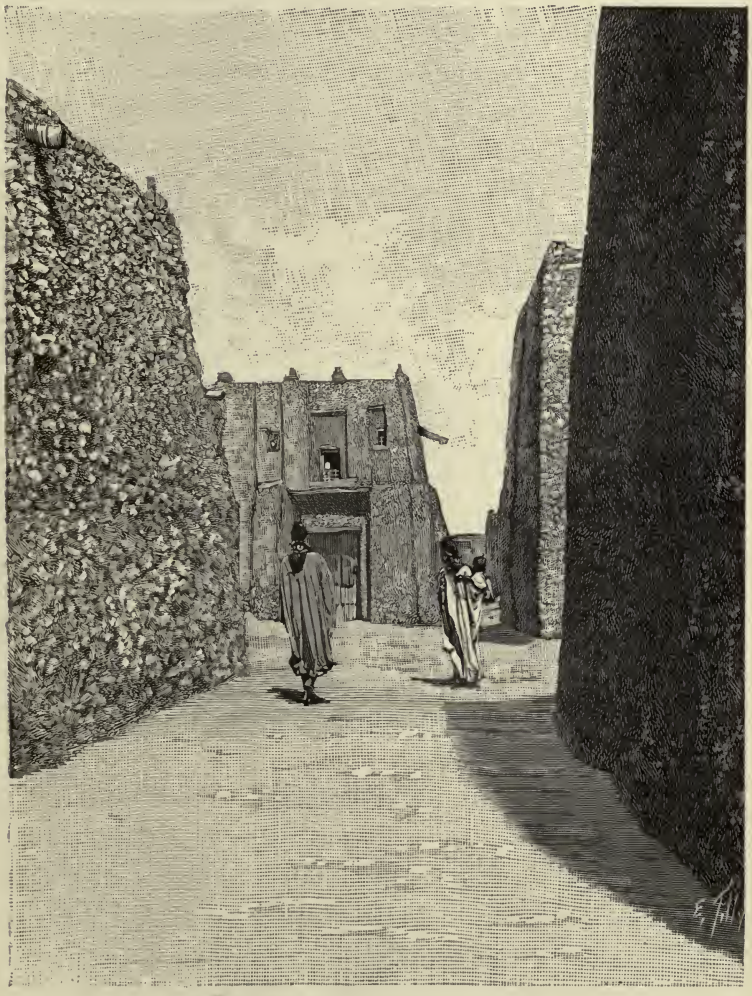
as their fortunes were made. All these people bought and sold directly from the caravan.

The Arabian traders formerly constituted the most numerous, enterprising, and richest element of the city. They introduced a system of banking, and the traveller could procure from them

TRADERS FROM THE COUNTRY OF MOSSI

letters of credit for the whole of northern Africa. They also gave credit to the *dioulas*, or travelling negro merchant. All this required considerable courage, for there are no police in the Sudan, and two or three years had often elapsed before they saw their debtors again. Frequently they never reappeared at

all, owing not so much to intentional dishonesty, as to the numerous wars and the frequent insecurity of the different



STREET IN THE ARABIAN QUARTER

routes. The quarters occupied by the Arabs were called the Baghinde, and the population, natives of Morocco, Tuat, and

Tripoli, formerly numbered about three hundred. They formed a colony which was known by the name of 'the community of white men,' and was analogous to the European colonies of Eastern cities. They had a deputy at their head, occupying a similar position to our consul, who was called 'head of the whites,' and who was always a member of the town council. On our entry into Timbuctoo, our officers found the 'head of the whites' to be a Tripolitan named Milad. He was a man of exceptional intelligence, and having had intercourse with Europeans in his own country, he was enabled, by his advice and other good offices, to give material assistance to our occupation.

Like the native population, this Arabian colony fell to pieces under the unbearable tyranny of the Touaregs; but for all that it would be a mistake to suppose that Timbuctoo was ever a very populous city. I should calculate the town to have possessed a population of only forty or fifty thousand inhabitants, even at the time of its greatest splendour. The absence and impracticability of any local industry explains a figure so inconsiderable when compared with other great places of Mussulman commerce, such as Cairo and Damascus, but sufficiently important when we realise that the entire population lived by, and was occupied with, commerce alone.

Seen in this light, the following figures will not be surprising. In January 1895 the statistics show a turnover of 460,000 francs, and at the time these figures were stated to me those who computed them assured me that they hardly represented a third of the actual sum. No serious effort has ever been made to obtain an accurate knowledge of such things. The captain of the port of Timbuctoo has not even an interpreter at his service. One has to be satisfied with the voluntary declarations made by the merchants to the military authorities and the native police super-

intendents of Kabara and Timbuctoo. Even less than his European *confrère* does the African merchant like to let the whole world into the secrets of his affairs.

It is necessary to mention the markets that since our occupation have been established by the timid or intractable upon the Lower Niger. Two of these markets, viz. Keirago and Bamba,

GOLD MERCHANTS.

now possess a traffic and population almost as important as those of Timbuctoo itself. All these causes of fluctuation must be taken into account before we can accurately estimate the capabilities of Timbuctoo. I believe it will not be long before the city will increase her annual commerce by twenty millions, that is to say, double the amount computed in 1893 for the entire colony of the French Congo.

Not only was Timbuctoo the great commercial centre, it also represented a city of pleasure to the whole of western Africa, and especially to the Arabs.

I talked at Senegal with one of those Moorish traders who form a very active and wealthy colony at St. Louis. Being *en route* for Timbuctoo, I naturally did not forget to ask him what he knew, or rather had heard, of the city, for he had never visited it. 'Ah! you are going to Timbuctoo!' he cried, with sparkling eyes. 'Oh! at Timbuctoo there are ladies, very many and very beautiful!' To his mind the city seemed to represent a gallant life rather than business. After gold, ivory, and ostrich feathers, the principal attractions of Timbuctoo for the people of the north are undoubtedly the easy manners prevailing in the Sudan. This is also confirmed by ancient geographers.

Leon the African contents himself with saying, 'The inhabitants of Timbuctoo have gay natures, and dancing goes on every evening until an advanced hour.' He was writing for the Vatican, which may explain his reserve. Ibn Batouba is more explicit. He observes on his arrival in the Sudan that 'these people have very singular manners. The men are not in the least jealous concerning their women-folk. The latter are not at all embarrassed in the presence of a man; and although they are very devout in their prayers, they go about with unveiled faces. They have friends and companions among the men, and the men on their side have friends among the women. Thus it often happens that a man, on returning home, finds his wife entertaining a friend. Having received permission from the kaid of Oualata to visit him, I presented myself at his house one day, and found him with a woman who was young and beautiful. I was about to retire upon seeing her, when, without showing the least shame, she went into fits of laughter at my embarrassment.

"Do not go," said the kaid. "It is only a good friend of mine." I was thunderstruck at seeing a jurisconsult, a scholar, and a man who had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, behaving in such a manner. I learned later that he had applied to the sultan for permission to make the pilgrimage that same year in company with his good friend! Upon another occasion I visited a man, and found him seated on a rug while his wife occupied a chair and was conversing with a man who was sitting beside her. "Who is that woman?" I asked. "She is my wife," he replied. "And who is the man sitting beside her?" "That is a friend of hers." "How can you suffer such a thing?" I indignantly asked; "you who have lived in our countries of the north, and know the rules of the Koran." "With us," he replied, "women have friendships that are in every way honourable, and no suspicion is ever aroused, for our women are not like those of your country." I was so disgusted by his folly that I instantly quitted his house, and have never set foot in it again.'

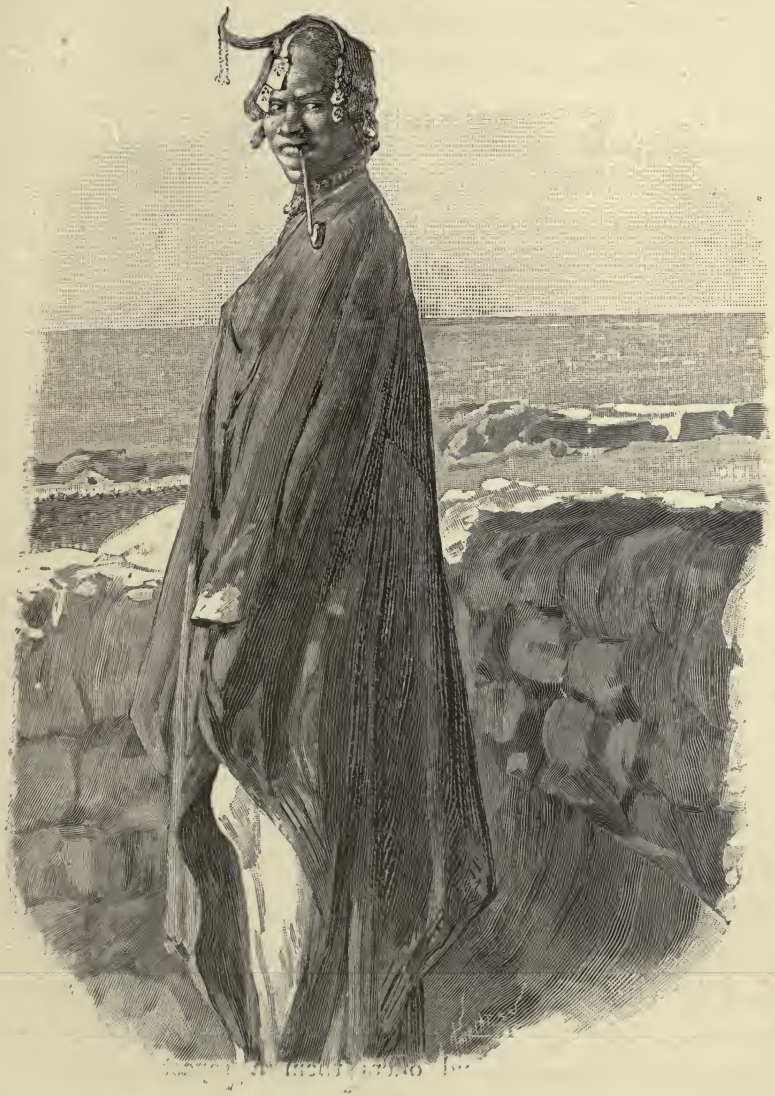
It was towards 1350 that Ibn Batouba was so scandalised by the manners of Oualata, and history has shown us that Timbuctoo was developed by the immigration thither of the people of the former town. Merchants and scholars would naturally import their manners as well as their commerce, wealth, and science.

In a chapter entitled, 'All that I found of evil in the conduct of the blacks,' the same author continues, 'The slaves, male and female, and the young girls, appear in the streets quite nude. I saw a great number thus even in the month of Ramadan. It is the custom for all great personages to break their fast with the sultan, and for this purpose they send parties of twenty or more young slaves to carry the provisions to the palace. They appear before the sultan quite nude, and his own daughters do the same. The evening before Ramadan I saw several slaves with food

leave the palace accompanied by two of the sultan's daughters, and they likewise wore no clothes.'

Ibn Batouba was a highly cultured man, as pious as he was learned, and deeply imbued with the veiled manners of Islam. Such customs could but shock and move to wrath a mind thus educated, but their effect upon the vulgar, the merchants and their clerks and camel-drivers, would probably be different. Bred in the Arabian world, in which men and women lived absolutely separate lives, and in which the latter disguise not only their form but even their features under heavy draperies, the spectacle of such manners must have been to them both novel and curious. They would not experience the repulsion of the learned Ibn Batouba, but would mix with this life and enjoy the new customs that in their own countries would raise a blush to their cheeks. Timbuctoo would soon be surrounded by a halo in their minds as being, upon earth, one little corner of the paradise promised by Mahomet. Askia the Great, having observed the Mohammedan practices of Egypt, attempted several reforms. The women were compelled to drape themselves from head to foot and adopt the life of the harem. He also established a 'body of men charged to exercise a constant surveillance, and to arrest and imprison any man found talking to a strange woman after nightfall.' These measures fell into disuse under the sons of the great king, and the manners of the country relapsed into their accustomed freedom.

Ibn Batouba's description of Timbuctoo being amply sufficient, I prefer to speak of the women of the city, that is to say, those of its aristocratic families. By reason of continual intermarriage with the Berber and Arab races, their features have become more regular and considerably refined. Although they are black in colour they approximate more to the Aryan type than the Negraic; the flatness of the nose and mouth is much less noticeable, and the



A LADY OF TIMBUCTOO

whole face is pleasantly lighted by wonderful eyes, whose gentle, intelligent glance seems to enfold you.

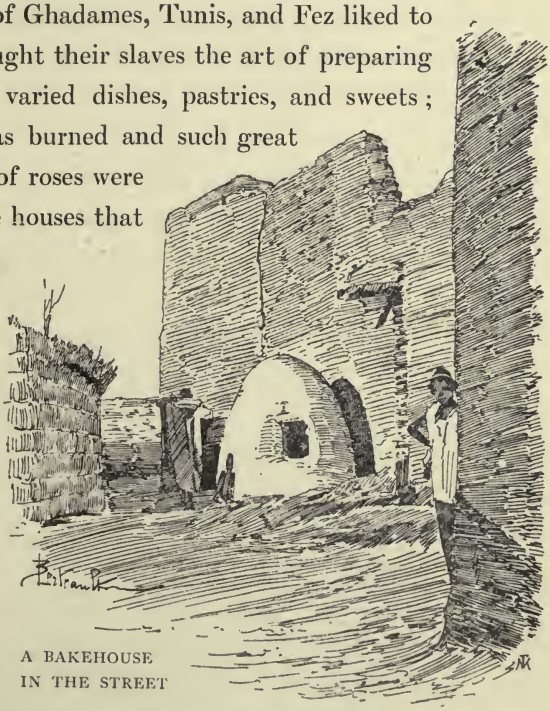
These natural charms are supplemented by the arts of coquetry. Their foreheads are charmingly adorned with bands of pearls and sequins, and the most accomplished hairdressers arrange their tresses in wonderful top-knots interspersed with ornaments of golden filagree. Ear-rings of the same precious metal dangle from their ears, and necklaces of gold, coral, or amber are wound round their throats; they also embellish their nails with henna and darken their eyes with antimony. Above all, they know how to drape themselves tastefully in the various kinds of stuff which are to be found in Timbuctoo—European, Arabian, and native fabrics.

Unlike her negro sister, the woman of Timbuctoo plays the part of great lady. She transfers the household work and the care of her children to slaves, contenting herself with seeing that her orders are carried out. She employs her time in reading and playing upon the violin (whose sole string is made of camel's hair), visiting her friends and—smoking pipes, for no one is perfect.

Over and above these *mondaines*, Timbuctoo possesses her *demi-mondaines*, who imitate the former in all things. The following is an account of fashionable life given me by one of its members:—

'Business here allows of plenty of leisure; we have to wait until certain articles have arrived, or until others have diminished or risen in price. The stranger merchant, in order to amuse himself, gathers his friends together at mid-day, or in the evening by preference, and offers them a repast. They eat fat sheep, pigeons, kuss-kuss, dates, kola nuts, wheaten biscuits, and honey-cakes. They drink tea, and sometimes coffee. Marabuts (to whom some present has been made beforehand)

are invited, and delight the assembly with their old-world histories. Each guest also tells some tale of his native country, and it is by these means we know so well, not only what is passing in Morocco, Tuat, and Tripoli, but all that is going on in Europe and France also. These little *fêtes* have become less frequent in the present time of misfortune. 'Formerly one used to receive an invitation nearly every day. Many Arabs from the north lived in Timbuctoo then, and one might have built houses of lumps of sugar, such great quantities of it were brought here by the caravans. The people of Ghadames, Tunis, and Fez liked to live well. They taught their slaves the art of preparing very elaborate and varied dishes, pastries, and sweets; so much incense was burned and such great quantities of attar of roses were sprinkled about the houses that you were seized with headache on the doorstep.



A BAKEHOUSE IN THE STREET

'The most costly *fêtes* were those given to the women. The people of Jenne, Sansanding, and Bammaku rivalled the Arabs, but the people of Tuat were the most extragavant. On the other hand, the Mossi did not squander their money in this fashion, but left the town as soon as their business was concluded.

'Those who had mistresses gave feasts which lasted many

hours, much intoxicating liquid was consumed, and the men became as drunk as the idolatrous Bambarras. Musicians were sent for, dancing began and was prolonged through the night. Men would spend two or three hundred gold pieces in disputing a mistress with a rival. A merchant of Sansanding is said to have made his lady a present of five hundred blocks of salt. This man lived near the mosque, and having passed the night in feasting he wished to sleep during the day, and had the audacity to say to the muezzin who calls the faithful to the five daily prayers, "I am very tired, your voice will disturb me. If I do not hear you throughout the day, I will make a rich offering to the mosque."

'Many people who only came to stay a few weeks would prolong their visit for months and years, detained either by the agreeable life of the town or some passion; and many who arrived with a fortune returned home ruined.'

CHAPTER XIII

THE UNIVERSITY OF SANKORÉ

The Queen of the Sudan would have been adorned with an imperfect diadem if the crowning glory of Art had been wanting.

Insuperable objections prevented her possession of monuments. Neither wood nor stone existed in her neighbourhood, not even plaster was at her disposal, and the priceless clay of Jenne is not to be found on the threshold of the desert. These facts are sufficient excuse for my not giving a long account of the architecture of the great mosques of Timbuctoo (Gingharaber and Sankoré) and the oratory of Sidi Yaia. The dimensions of these buildings greatly exceed those of the ordinary dwellings; but a mere collection of walls, more or less high, long and thick, can scarcely be called a work of art, and nothing in these temples recalls the happy decorative harmony of the old mosque of Jenne. In a distant view of the city, their three minarets, looking like abbreviated pyramids, represent their only interest.[1]

Unable, therefore, to develop the sensuous arts, Timbuctoo reserved all her strength for the intellectual, and here her dominion was supreme. The city became the religious, scientific,

[1] The King of Mali erected a palace at Timbuctoo in the fourteenth century. But palaces have a precarious existence in the Sudan, and by the sixteenth century it had disappeared. Its ruins, forming a compact hillock in the west of the town, are now used as a slaughter-house.

and literary centre of the Nigerian regions. 'Salt comes from the north, gold from the south, and silver from the country of the white men, but the word of God and the treasures of wisdom are only to be found in Timbuctoo,' says an old Sudanese proverb.

It would perhaps be an exaggeration to put the school of Timbuctoo on a level with those of Syria, Spain, Morocco, and, above all, Egypt; for I must admit that I have not found among her libraries any work equal in literary glory to those masterpieces of the Arabian language and intellect—the *Hariri*, the *Hamadani*, or the Bedouin *Kaisadas*. For all that, Timbuctoo was not merely the great intellectual nucleus of the Sudan, that is to say, of the negroes—she was also one of the great scientific centres of Islam itself, her university being the younger sister of those of Cairo, Cordova, Fez, and Damascus. Her collection of ancient manuscripts leaves us in no doubt upon the point, and permits us to reconstruct this side of her past in its smallest details.

It is in Eastern Africa that the origin of the intellectual glory of Timbuctoo must be sought, and it is to the Moors that it must be attributed. We know that this fraction of the Berber peoples adopted the religion of their Arabian conquerors, and it was through the Moorish tribes who ranged along the Atlantic coast that Islamism penetrated to the country of the blacks in the ninth century. Wherever the Mussulman religion found foothold it was invariably followed by the language of the Koran and the Arabian sciences. The holy book contained, or should contain, everything needful for a disciple of Mahomet. It gave laws to man and regulated his faith, whether religious or philosophical. The Koran was a code in which everything

was decreed—so much so, indeed, that to elucidate it was to teach religion, philosophy, and law. Grammar and literature were also founded on it, for they were taught on the lines of the language employed by the editor of the holy book and illustrated by examples taken from it.

Thus the Arabian language and culture spread over the frontiers of the negro countries. Oualata, 'where the holiest and most learned men resided,' became its bulwark; and upon the emigration of her people to Timbuctoo, the latter town became the palladium of the faith. The Moorish poets and scholars of Spain brought with them the harvests of Grenada and Cordova. The caravans from the north spread abroad the progress of Fez, Marrakesh, and Tunis; and the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina proved the means of disseminating the many advantages of Cairo. Timbuctoo, more than any other town, was enabled to profit by the conquests of Arabian intellect and to collect and arrange large libraries. Market of merchandise as she was, she also became the storehouse of the Arabian language and science, spreading them afar with her textiles and salt.

The confusion of tongues prevailing in the metropolis of the Sudan necessitated a common language, and Songhois, Foulbes, Toucouleurs, Touaregs, Bambarras, Mossi, Haoussankas, Malinkas, etc., all used Arabic as the vehicle of a mutual comprehension.

An entire class of the population was devoted to the study of letters, being called fakirs or sheiks by the old manuscripts, and marabuts by the Sudanese of to-day. The first term carries the meaning of jurist, 'those who know the law,' and is interesting, as it proves that the scientific movement originated from the study of the judicial principles contained

in the Koran. The name sheik or marabut is preferable for present use, as it signifies both priest and doctor, and therefore better expresses the dual character of the Sudanese scholar.

The marabut is a man who, by his devotion to Islam and his application of the duties indicated by the Koran, by his profound knowledge of the holy writ, his learning and the dignity of his personal life, sets an example to all true believers. He belongs in general to a family which, so to speak, makes a profession of devotion and science; this twofold reputation descends from father to son, and is sustained by pilgrimages to the holy places and sojourns in the great Arabian universities. We possess the biographies of several hundreds of these learned men, and all are related to one another in a more or less direct line. A cerebral refinement was thus produced among a certain proportion of the negraic population which has had surprising results, as we shall see later, and which gives the categorical lie to the theorists who insist upon the inferiority of the black races.

These pious and cultured families of Timbuctoo lived within the precincts of the mosque of Sankoré, and formed a locality analogous to the Quartier Latin of Paris. They were held in great esteem by both dignitaries and people. 'The learned Ahmed (father to Ahmed Baba the writer) was attacked by a dangerous illness. In order to render homage to the merits and piety of this holy man, the sultan went every evening to pass several hours by his bed of suffering, continuing this assiduity until the pious sheik was completely recovered.' For a long time a portion of the taxes (the *diaka* or tenth) was reserved for these marabuts. The Songhoi kings pensioned the most celebrated, and they received many gifts, especially in the month of Ramadan. They were intrusted

THE MOSQUE OF SANKORÉ

with the education of children, and, to ensure them the tranquillity so necessary to the man of thought and letters, their affairs were managed and their properties cultivated by their slaves.

Each marabut followed his special vocation. Some confined themselves to the study of religion and the service of God and the mosque, others practised law, becoming magistrates or kadi, and a great number consecrated their lives to the art of teaching. It was not unusual to see two, or even all three, of these professions united in one person, and the study of books and the art of writing them were pursued by all.

Having already described the rich metropolis and the city of pleasure, we will now, with the aid of the marabuts who consecrated themselves to God, resuscitate that Holy City of which the *Tarik* proudly says, 'Never has Timbuctoo been sullied by the worship of idols nor by rendering homage to any other deity than the merciful God. It is the dwelling-place of wise men, the servants of the Most High, and the perpetual habitation of saints and ascetics.'

The marabuts, under the direction of the Sheik ul Islam and the imans, called the faithful to prayers, held public readings of the sacred writings, and preached during the month of Ramadan, the great Mussulman fast. Some, like the recluses of the Thebaïd, withdrew from the world and fasted incessantly. They passed entire nights in prayer in the mosque, and were full of care and pity for orphans. Others—but let us rather admire the perfect picture given in the original.

'The very learned and pious sheik, Abou Abdallah, had no property, all his goods went to succour the poor and unhappy, and he bought slaves that he might give them their liberty. His

house had no door, every one entered unannounced, and men came to see him from all parts and at all hours, especially on Sundays after the two o'clock prayer. Moors and Arabs flocked to him in crowds as soon as they learned his virtues.'

We might be reading the life of some Christian saint; and numerous miracles are not lacking to complete the resemblance. The following was accomplished by a marabut who lived somewhere about the year 1330: 'The fakir El Hadj, grandfather of the Kadi Abderrahman, was living in Bankou when the king of Mali attacked that town. The people gathered round him before going to battle, and he instructed them to eat of a certain herb. With the exception of one man, all did as they were directed. Then said El Hadj, "Go forth to battle, and the arrows of the enemy shall have no power to hurt you." They all returned safe and victorious, with the exception of the man who would not eat, and he had died in the contest.' A no less extraordinary incident happened to the great-great-grandfather of the celebrated writer Ahmed Baba. 'Being in Medina (Arabia), he asked permission to visit the tomb of the Prophet. This grace being denied to him, he sat down upon the threshold and recited the litanies of God's elect. The door immediately opened of its own accord, and the priests, amazed by this marvel, humiliated themselves before him and kissed his hands.'

The life of Sidi Yaia, the patron of Timbuctoo, is particularly full of miracles. One day, as he was holding an open-air reading of the Koran, a cloud appeared overhead and rain fell. The rain being followed by a clap of thunder, his disciples arose to seek shelter. 'Remain in your places,' said Sidi Yaia, 'it will not rain upon this spot.' And thus it happened.' The following anecdote is equally remarkable: 'His female slaves wished to cook a fish, and for a whole day they submitted it to the action of

the fire without result. The women were astounded, but Sidi Yaia, overhearing their talk, said to them, "As I went to pray in the mosque this morning my foot touched something moist; it was probably your fish, for that which my body has touched fire has no power to burn!"'

Miracles being so plentiful, it will surprise no one to learn that the marabuts were on equally familiar terms with prophecies and visions. The departure from Marrakesh of the Moorish army which was to conquer the Sudan was announced on the same day to the people of Timbuctoo by the fakir Abderrahman. 'After reciting the morning prayer,' says the *Tarik*, 'he invoked the name of Allah three times, and said, "This year thou shalt hear many things, the like of which thou hast never heard, and thou shalt see many things, the like of which thou hast never seen!"'

In the early part of Sidi Yaia's life, Mahomet was wont to appear to him every night, but as he grew older these visits became less frequent, until finally the Prophet only appeared to him once a year. When asked the reason of this remissness, Sidi Yaia replied, 'The only reason which occurs to me is, that formerly I paid no attention to trade, and now I devote a good deal of time to it.' 'But why do you do so?' 'Because I have no wish to be dependent on others,' answered the saint.

Mohammed Neddo, who governed Timbuctoo in the name of the Touaregs shortly before its conquest by Sunni Ali, was on very intimate terms with Sidi Yaia. Towards the end of his life it was shown to Neddo in a dream that though the sun had set the moon had not risen. This portentous vision was imparted to his friend, who said, 'Art thou afraid to learn the meaning of this dream?' 'I am not afraid,' was the reply. 'It signifies, then, that I shall die very soon, and that you will die shortly after.'

Neddo was overcome with sadness. 'Art thou afraid?' asked Sidi Yaia. 'This sadness is not caused by fear of death,' answered Neddo, 'but by the great love I bear for my little children.' 'Confide them to God,' said the prophet. Sidi Yaia died shortly after this, and Neddo soon followed him, and was buried by the side of his friend in the mosque he had built.

The marks of divine favour by which Allah distinguished his marabuts from other believers were even manifested after death. A certain sheik had given instructions that only one of his disciples should be permitted to prepare his funeral toilet. When the time came the disciple found a lighted taper by the side of the corpse. He commanded that it should be extinguished and the grave-clothes brought. When the winding-sheet was spread over the body it immediately gave forth such a marvellous light that the whole chamber was illuminated by it.

The old chronicles relate a thousand incidents as remarkable in every way as those I have just quoted. A learned doctor of Timbuctoo was justified in saying, 'The holy men of this city were not surpassed in piety by the companions of the Prophet.' These pious individuals were called *Oualiou*, and men of evil life, who found their last moments full of the fear of the Lord, requested that they might be buried near these saints, in order that the departed should intercede for them with the Most High. Pilgrimages were made to their houses and their gardens. Miracles were asked for, and granted, because—well, because there is no reason why they should not be granted when asked for by true believers.

North, south, east, and west of the town, upon the crests of the dunes, are built the little chapels which mark their graves and form a rampart of sanctity round the city. Wishing to visit these dunes, in memory of the charming tales which had grown

out of the dust of those who slept there, my servant and I sallied forth one morning, with Winchesters duly charged in readiness for the Touaregs. Scarcely a dozen of these *edicules* are still standing under the sickly shade cast by a few of the consumptive trees of the desert. We found an old man before one of them, a marabut of the present who had come to visit his brothers of the past. He had opened the door of one of the little chapels, and its interior showed a small clay mound covered with pieces of a coarse stuff. Sitting on the threshold, the old man quavered a few verses from the Koran.

It was the only sound we heard, and he was the only living being we met in the white furnace of the sands, the vast field of death which surrounds the city. At every step the foot knocked against some skull, tibia, or even an entire skeleton, the remains of bygone generations, and of corpses confided yesterday to the inconstant sands, and disinterred to-day by the wild beasts of the desert. The sternness and sterility of the desert, and the

THE TOMBS SURROUNDING TIMBUCTOO

accumulated death encircling me, recalled the vision of the Valley of Jehoshaphat spreading before the walls of Jerusalem the Holy, whose soil, like this, produces only an efflorescence of death.

The marabuts, who devoted themselves to the study of law, administered justice according to the precepts of the Koran and the decisions contained in the most important works of the Arabian jurists. They also made inventories of property, determining its succession, and generally filling the position of lawyer.

The scholars of Timbuctoo yielded in nothing to the saints and their miracles. During their sojourns in the foreign universities of Fez, Tunis, and Cairo, 'they astounded the most learned men of Islam by their erudition.' That these negroes were on a level with the Arabian savants is proved by the fact that they were installed as professors in Morocco and Egypt. In contrast to this we find that the Arabs were not always equal to the requirements of Sankoré. 'A celebrated jurist of Hédjaz (Arabia), arriving in Timbuctoo with the intention of teaching, found the town full of Sudanese scholars. Observing them to be his superiors in knowledge, he withdrew to Fez, where he succeeded in obtaining employment.'

The profession of teaching was absolutely free, its only qualification consisting of a sufficiently large audience. If one may believe their biographies, these masters were of rare merit, full of kindliness and goodwill towards their pupils, and keenly alive to the responsibilities of their position. They would refuse the exalted and lucrative post of iman in order to continue their profession. One of them 'multiplied obstacles to avoid being made Grand Kadi.'

The following is a description of the daily occupations of Mohammed ben Abou Bakr, one of the most respected scholars of his day: 'He gave lectures on different subjects from early morning until ten o'clock. After returning home for prayer he went to the kadi to settle the affairs of his clients and act as mediator between disputants. He recited the midday prayer in

public, and taught in his own house until three o'clock; he then said the prayer of *asr*, and went out to teach in a different place until dusk, and after sunset he gave a final lecture in the mosque.'

Here is the portrait of a professor of whom it was written,

TOMB OF A SAINT

'The Sudan did not possess another as learned and pious.' He was endowed with every imaginable gift, and was, in fact, none other than Sidi Yaia himself, the patron of Timbuctoo; and we shall see him under the triple aspect of saint, kadi, and scholar:—

'He was gifted with a calm intelligence which was only equalled by his infallible memory. His science was universal, his whole personality commanded respect and obedience, and many men owned no other rule of conduct than the precepts which fell from his lips. People came in crowds to ask his blessing, bringing with them gifts of considerable value. He received all these visitors with great modesty, and invariably gave their presents away to others. On being elected kadi he abolished many of the abuses and corrupt practices of the tribunal, and was a model of equity in the eyes of all true believers. The

pressing duties of magistracy in no way abated his ardour for teaching, and by his eloquence he charmed all who listened to him. What clearness of explanation! How sure and easy a guide was his method! Such an intellect was surely created to revolutionise!' Sidi Yaia, in fact, resuscitated the sciences in the negro countries, and instructed many young men who afterwards distinguished themselves in letters. His life was as long as it was useful; he lived to the age of eighty-seven (1373-1462), and was employed in teaching during fifty of those years.

It would be superfluous to insist that these learned men must have possessed marvellous libraries, for their catalogues are mentioned by the Sudanese authors. Religious, judicial, and grammatical works occupy the first place. They consist of collections of traditions concerning the Prophet, such as the *Sahih of Bokhari*, the *Djana of Essoyouti*, the *Sahih of Moslem*, and the *Sogra*, in which the author says that, having been transported to Paradise, he saw Abraham engaged in teaching little children and setting them copies to write. The *Alfyga* is a grammatical treatise, and the *Chemail of Termedi* contains a description of the qualities of the Prophet, his private life and policy. Finally, works on law are represented by the doctrines of the sect of Iman Malek, including the numerous commentaries to which they gave birth, the abridgment of Sidi Khalil, the *Risala* of Abou-Zaid of Kairwan, etc.

Poetry and works of imagination are not lacking, nor compositions of a kind peculiar to Arabian literature; such as the *Hariri* and *Hamadani*. I found a copy of the *Choice of Marvels*, composed at Mossul by the learned Abu Abdallah ben Abderrahim of Grenada in the year 1160. The historical and geographical works of Morocco, Tunis, and Egypt were well known in Timbuctoo (Ibn Batouba being often quoted), and the pure

sciences were represented by books on astronomy and medicine. In short, the libraries of Timbuctoo may be said to have included almost the whole of Arabian literature.

Amongst other trades, the city made a speciality of manuscripts. 'Books sell very well there,' said Leon the African, 'and a greater profit is to be made out of them than out of any other merchandise.' The learned doctors were, to use an expression which may appear strange when applied to negroes, bibliophiles. In the best sense of the word, be it understood; they had no mania for collecting uncut books and bindings, but were true lovers of books. We see them 'searching with a real passion for volumes they did not possess,' and making copies when they were too poor to buy what they wanted. They would in this manner collect from seven hundred to two thousand volumes; and in marked contrast to the miserly book-lovers of our day, these bibliophiles experienced a real joy in sharing their most precious manuscripts with others. 'Abou Bakr loved the friends of science, and paid them every sort of attention. He would lend them his most cherished books and never ask for them back again, however rare they might be. He lavished his entire library in this manner (may Allah reward him!); the student who came to his door to borrow was never denied, and this is the more remarkable, as he was passionately devoted to books, and would only obtain his reward in heaven.'

The libraries of Timbuctoo were sadly reduced by the pillage of the Foulbes and Toucouleurs. At the present time the marabuts and kadis are best provided, but every wealthy inhabitant prides himself upon the possession of a few books. He does not often read them, it is true, but he likes to show them, which, to him, is almost as good.

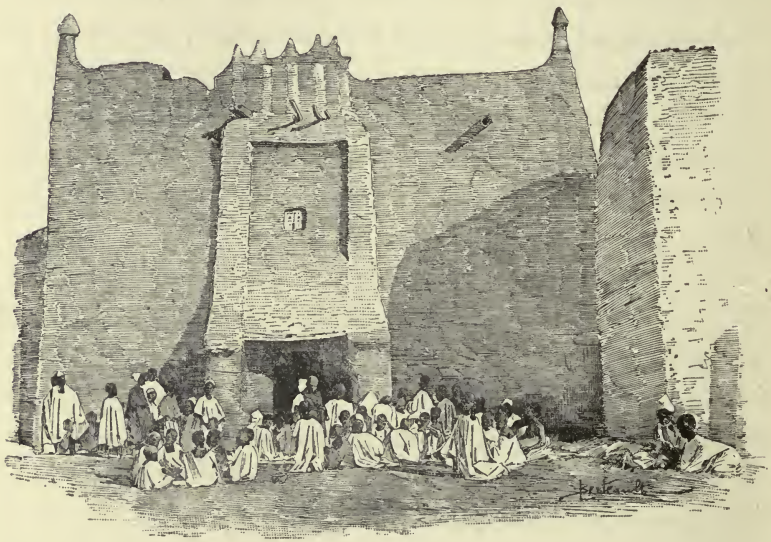
In spite of this I found it very difficult to procure any books

in the early part of my stay. They were afraid I should practise the nefarious customs of the Toucouleurs and Foulbes. After I had gained some credit among them, a few solitary pages were lent to me, and when they saw that I treated them tenderly and faithfully returned them, they decided to trust me with whole volumes. I never succeeded in inducing any of them to sell me a book, however much I offered for it, and had to content myself with copying all that seemed interesting to me. One man told me the history of a unique volume which he had parted with to a merchant from the south, and had regretted ever since. He had received forty gros of gold for it, which, at the rate of ten francs a gros, represents a respectable sum for a book, even in France.

From the masters we will turn to the pupils. These flocked to the city from all sides, from the desert, Morocco, and all parts of the Sudân. Jenne and the secondary intellectual circles, such as Tindirma, Dia, Sa, Korienza, etc., served as preparatory schools for Timbuctoo. The sons of the Songhoi kings quitted the palaces of Gao, and the children of the Touaregs deserted their great tents to receive an education at the University of Sankoré. The *Tarik* mentions this interesting fact: 'One of the Askia, Mohammed Bankouri, collected an army with which to dispute the supreme power with a king proclaimed at Gao. Pausing at Timbuctoo, and having conversed with the Grand Kadi, he requested him to write a letter to his rival, saying that he, Bankouri, renounced the throne that he might follow the life of a student in this city of books.' Side by side with princes and sons of chieftains came poor wretches, eager for knowledge, who were supported by the dignitaries of the town, and by those merchants who liked to play the *rôle* of Mæcenas.

The student or *Taliba* arrives armed with the groundwork of

instruction; some small marabut of his native country having taught him to read and write. It is a picture one constantly sees in the Sudan. In the shade before the schoolmaster's house, a collection of children are gathered together in the coolest corner. Arranged in circles and sitting on their heels, they repeat verses of the Koran in chorus, following the inflections, marking the pauses,



A SCHOOL AT JENNE

and imitating the tone indicated to them. They learn to form the Arabic characters by copying a page of the holy book on the wooden tablets which take the place of the too costly paper. From time to time the tablet is washed and set in the sun to dry, after which it is again ready for use.

Reading and writing being accomplished, the master delivers a grammatical and exegetical explanation of the text. He either takes the words one by one, or grouped in sentences, and discourses on the rules of syntax, explains the meaning of the

A SCHOOL IN THE STREET

passage, and adds some religious or historical reflections. When the entire Koran has been gone through, the parents, who have offered weekly presents of cowries or in kind, make a final and more extensive present to the professor, and invite him to a little *fête* given to their friends and acquaintances.

The young man is now prepared for the reading of works of greater importance of another kind. I say 'reading' designedly, for Arabian instructions consist less of lessons *ex professo* than of the explanation of books.

Thus prepared, the *Taliba* sets out for Timbuctoo, and there he usually studies under several masters, each of whom makes a speciality of elucidating some particular work. He goes from one to another, according to their merits or the dictates of his own fancy. The lessons are given under the arcades of the mosque of Sankoré, or in the court or gardens of the teacher's house.

The branches of instruction were many and various. The theologians commented upon and analysed the great sacred books, and taught rhetoric, logic, eloquence, and diction in order to prepare the student to spread abroad the words of God and maintain controversies. The jurist expounded the law according to the Malakite dogmas, and the stylists taught the art of writing 'in ornamental terms.' Others professed grammar, prosody, philology, astronomy, and ethnography; and others again were 'very versed in the traditions, biographies, annals, and histories of mankind.' Mathematics do not appear to have formed a special course; and as for medicine, the grossest empiricism was mingled with the hygienic principles of the therapeutic Arab. A certain sheik is shown curing a toothache 'with a little earth from his garden,' and, worse than that, 'a great personage having been attacked by leprosy, doctors came from all parts of Africa to prescribe for him. One of them said, "He can only be cured by

eating the heart of a young man." The emir instantly ordered one to be killed, but it did no good, and the great personage died of his disease.'

A SCHOOL-MASTER

These studies were exceedingly long. 'We were three years over the explanation of the Teshil of the Iman Malek before we acquired a thorough mastery of the subtleties of the Arabian language,' says a writer of Timbuctoo. Physical education, on

the other hand, was grossly neglected. Even in the time of Sunni Ali the children were forbidden to play or practise bodily exercises. When the learned men, pursued by the tyrant, were obliged to quit Timbuctoo, 'they did not know how to mount a camel, and fell miserably to the ground.'

The students, having completed their education, receive a diploma or licence to teach. They are now marabuts in their turn, and all the liberal careers of the Sudan are open to them. They can enter the mosques and become imans or preachers in some small town, or they can aspire to the position of kadi, or assistant-kadi, in their own country. Some adopt the careers of their masters and found fresh families of sheiks.

Rich merchants often take one of these young men into their household, where he plays a part analogous to that formerly occupied by the chaplain in European families. He occupies himself with the education of the children, reads aloud to the head of the family, and writes his letters. He also gives his opinion on matters of hygiene and morality, superintends the merchant's charities, and tells him amusing stories. Other *Talibas* gain a livelihood by giving lessons in the Arabian language and writing to the negro strangers passing through Timbuctoo. A great number fill the office of public scribe, and undertake the correspondence of different merchants; they also copy books, for which they are paid from fifteen to one hundred francs, according to the importance of the work.

Thieves and hypocrites may also be counted among their numbers. These exploit the credulous and cultivate superstition among the people, reducing Islamism to the level of the fetich-worship and the practice of magic, brought from Egypt by the ancestors of the Songhois. They will prepare noxious potions for a consideration, and hold somnambulistic consultations. They fore-

tell the failure or success of a journey or enterprise, manufacture talismans, and profess to cast spells. The traffic of talismans or *gris-gris* is particularly lucrative, their principal clients being Touaregs and negroes. These *gris-gris* consist of prayers or invocations, written on a morsel of stuff and sewn up in a leathern bag. They are suspended from the walls of houses to keep away demons and djinns, and to serve as a protection against enemies. Certain rigmaroles read on a Monday or a Friday will protect travellers on their journeys. I have even discovered a 'recipe for driving away locusts.' Here it is: 'Any one desiring this, should write upon four sheets of paper the prayer I have composed, and place one in each corner of his field. He must then take a yellow and a red locust and pronounce the first verse of my prayer seven times, after which he must say, "O Locust, if thou and thy companions do not quit this field, thou shalt be charged with the abominable sin of him who hath relations with mother and daughter."'

A learned man of great celebrity, El Moucheili, wrote a book on these charlatans, entitled, 'Advice to honest people against allowing themselves to be duped by pretended marabuts.'

A SEWING-SCHOOL IN THE SUDAN

CHAPTER XIV

POLITICS AND LITERATURE

Not content with being priests, magistrates, and scholars, the marabuts further extended their influence over the domains of politics and literature.

We have shown great and small hastening to the dwellings of these learned men to seek counsel and consolation from their holiness and wisdom, and in this manner the marabuts accustomed themselves to giving advice without always waiting to be asked for it. These pious and wise men 'remonstrated, sometimes severely, with people of all classes, even princes.' Kadi El Akib, for example, 'possessed a mixture of firmness and independence which raised him above all prejudices; he expressed his opinion to the sultan with the same frankness he employed to his humblest subject. When he observed anything in his sovereign's conduct that was reproved by the Law of the Prophet' (*nota bene*, it is always possible to find a text in the Law of the Prophet which will command or forbid anything, no matter what), 'he would resign his post and retire to his house.' Thus the marabuts glided into the dangerous path of politics.

Their intrusion into the political world soon led to their being regarded with grave suspicion, and finally caused their fall. As we have seen, the soldierly fist of Sunni Ali weighed heavily upon those who opposed him.

The marabuts regained their lost ground, however, under the Askias. The founder of the dynasty, whether from conviction or expediency, showed himself their ardent and untiring friend, and we have seen them lending devoted support to the usurper in return, and legitimising with sacred texts his assumption of the throne. They were kept constantly about his person, and he consulted them in everything, even asking their advice in matters of war. He appealed to them in all legal affairs, and treated them, in short, as his ministers. A pamphlet of the period, found in a library at Timbuctoo, describes the part played by the marabuts. Its author is not a Sudanese, but is one of those Arabian doctors who travelled about the Sudan in the reign of the famous monarch, and whose description is unfortunately still wanting. The very original character of El Moucheïli may serve to fill the blank, perhaps.

Born in Tlemcen in Algeria, 'he combined a remarkable intelligence,' says his biographer, 'with a passion for study, and was distinguished as much by his piety as his erudition.' Of a bold and enterprising disposition, and filled with zeal for the Koran, he devoted all his knowledge and energies to the cause of fanaticism. Having gained considerable influence with the Assembly of Notables during his sojourn in the confederation of Tuat, he urged them to a persecution of the Jews. Not content with degrading and depriving these people of their privileges, he incited the populace to massacre them and destroy their synagogues. The Grand Kadi of the Republic highly disapproved of this violence, and the ulemas of Fez, Tunis, and Tlemcen were consulted on the question. Two of them defended El Moucheïli, and one of them drew up a long memorial on the legitimacy of intolerance, addressing the hero of Tuat in the following words: 'All honour to our brother the zealous doctor, who alone had courage in these times of cor-

ruption to proclaim his faith in open day, to resist abuses, and to arouse lukewarm souls to the true religion. It is a glory to him to have opposed with such energy the enterprises of the Jews (whom may God crush with His scorn!). He only has been found sufficiently faithful to awaken the people whom worldly interest has made deaf to the voice of the Prophet.' On the reception of this letter El Moucheïli announced the triumph of his opinions to his partisans and commanded the destruction of the synagogue. He put a price upon the Jews, and paid seven mitkals (ninety francs) a head for them out of his own purse. The massacre which followed obliged him to quit the country and seek refuge in the heart of the Sudan, where he found shelter and a position in the court of Askia the Great.

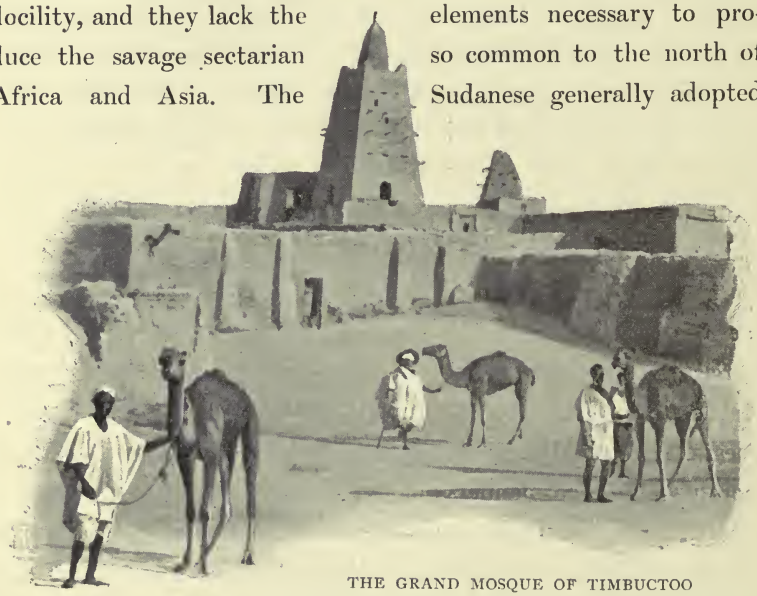
The Songhoi king asked him seven questions on the subject of the reforms then occupying his mind, viz. the regulation of commercial transactions, the suppression of fraud, the establishment of the tax on land, the tithe upon newly conquered countries, the question of inheritance, and the measures to be taken to ensure morality and good manners among the Sudanese.

The pamphlet in my possession contains these questions and the answers made to them by the Arabian sheik, which are treated as carrying all the force of law. El Moucheïli counsels, among other things, the creation of inspectors of markets and manners, and the verification of weights and measures. Besides these excellent reforms, he suggested the adoption of measures which are in every way regrettable, bearing as they do the imprint of the severity and intolerance of which he had given ample evidence in his campaign against the Jews of Tuat. He advocated the most stringent regulations, generally accompanied by a death penalty, and always based upon the most judicial and religious arguments.

This excessive zeal and the great influence El Moucheïli

exercised over the Sudan (he is still an authority there) leads us to a subject upon which hitherto we have not had occasion to touch, but which, nevertheless, is of considerable importance, viz. the psychology of the Mussulman negro.

The character of the Sudanese in general, and the Songhoi in particular, is essentially based upon a foundation of goodness and docility, and they lack the elements necessary to produce the savage sectarian so common to the north of Africa and Asia. The Sudanese generally adopted



THE GRAND MOSQUE OF TIMBUCTOO

the religion of Mahomet out of pure snobbishness, because their conquerors professed it, and it reflected some prestige upon them and gave them a claim to consideration. Once under European rule, therefore, there would be no impediment to their conversion to Christianity. Left to themselves, they form the type of the tolerant Mussulman. Five centuries after the introduction of Islamism into the Sudan we still find the fetichist's temple standing side by side with the mosque, even in great centres like Jenne, where the idolatrous altars were not destroyed until 1475. Among

the numerous biographies of the saints I have never seen the intolerance of these pious individuals boasted of nor even mentioned. In a general way, the tepid fervour of the populace is tainted by the naïve scepticism displayed by Sunni Ali in the very typical incidents I have already described. They seldom observe the fast of Ramadan in all its rigour, and I have mentioned the consumption of intoxicating liquids once or twice before. Circumcision and the daily prayers constitute, in fact, their principal observances of the Mohammedan religion.

Contemporary history of the Sudan has, however, revealed frequent fanatical explosions and numerous holy wars. The curious biography of El Moucheïli has disclosed one of the causes of these disturbances, namely, the influence of the Arabian Mussulman, which at the present moment principally makes itself felt by the propaganda of the sect of the Snoussi. Another fruitful cause is to be found in the pilgrimages to Mecca. It is, therefore, through direct, or indirect, contact with the foreign Mussulman of the white races that the Sudanese is transformed into a sectarian, and it is from this contact that we must preserve him in order to maintain peace in the Nigerian countries.

Finally, and most characteristically, it is not the pure-bred negro among the populations of the Sudan who allows himself to be led into holy wars, but it is those people in whose veins the blood of the white races flows, the Foulbes of Berber origin, and the Toucouleurs, who are a mixture of the Foulbe and the negro of Mali.

Among the Sudanese marabuts noted as the ministers of Askia the Great, Mohaman Koti, or Koutou, deserves special notice. With him we shall have occasion to speak of the literary productions of the Sudan, for among the Nigerian writers worthy of attention he is the first in date.

According to some he was a Malinka, according to others a Songhoi born at Karamiou. His education, begun at Tindirma, was completed at Timbuctoo, and he became the most esteemed and even tyrannical counsellor of the great king. His authority originated in the following manner. Askia one day distributed some dried dates among his retinue, and Koti, newly arrived at the court, was somehow overlooked. Shortly afterwards the learned doctor assembled his pupils and dispensed fresh dates among them. This miracle—for the Sudan does not produce dates—having reached the ears of the king, he immediately discerned that Koti was marked with the divine seal. From that moment Askia gave him all his confidence, and bestowed so much wealth upon him that he was free to devote himself entirely to literature.

The Sudanese doctors were enabled to add the works of their own authors to the books of Bagdad, Cairo, and Grenada, which formed the foundations of their libraries. These writings were almost invariably of a serious kind, scholastic and judicial treatises, and the greater part of their productions are entirely without interest to us. A fraction of it, on the other hand, is of the highest importance, and contains those historical works which shed so much light upon the obscure past of these vast regions.

Under the title of the *Fatassi*, Koti edited a history of the kingdoms of Ganata, Songhoi, and Timbuctoo, from their origins to the year 1554 (950 of the Hegira). In spite of the most persistent research, I have not been able to procure more than fragments of this important work. Every one knows all about it, but no one possesses it; it is the phantom book of the Sudan.

Koti was born in 1460, and as he survived Askia the Great by fourteen years, and was connected with all the public affairs, his account of this brilliant epoch of the Sudan would be of

inestimable value. The fragments we have discovered amply prove this, and their extreme interest greatly augments our regrets. 'Perhaps you will find a complete copy at Dia or Korienza,' they told me. But all I could discover was one of the descendants of the historian, named Ahmadou Sansarif, who exercised the functions of kadi at Timbuctoo. He was very well informed, and revised the manuscripts which had been copied for me, and these are the facts he imparted concerning the great work of his progenitor :—

'The *Fatassi* has never been so well known as the other histories of the Sudan because it dealt with the concerns of many peoples and many men. Families, since grown rich and powerful, and the chiefs of various countries, were shown with very humble origins, sometimes being the offspring of slaves. The book caused great annoyance to many people on this account, and those interested bought all the copies they could procure and destroyed them. The original manuscript, however, had been transmitted to our family. One of my great-aunts, living in Tindirmah, had inherited it, and guarded it jealously. To avoid unpleasantness, and at the same time preserve the book from destruction, she had it placed in a wooden box and buried under a hillock close to her house. My aunt was a widow, and among other charms she possessed the gift of conversation. Her house was the centre of frequent gatherings, and when she was asked, "What is this mound in your garden?" she always replied, "It is Ahmadou Koti, my venerable ancestor, who is buried there." Her friends never failed to say a short prayer over the mound, for Koti had left a great reputation for piety and wisdom behind him. A Foulbe succeeded in becoming so intimate with my aunt that she imparted her secret to him. He immediately quitted Tindirma and went to his king, Cheikou Ahmadou, to reveal to him the existence of a complete copy of

the *Fatassi*. Shortly afterwards the king sent a troop of soldiers to dig up the mound and discover its precious treasure; but as they were returning to Hamadallai the bearer of the priceless volume capsized his canoe, and the book was lost to the world for ever.'

We have seen that, in order to legitimise his holy war and his conquests, Cheikou Ahmadou gave himself out to be the twelfth Khalif, and rested the pretension upon an obvious fabrication professing to be taken from the *Fatassi*. Is it not likely that the Foulbes organised the persecution of the book with the intention of destroying the proofs of their king's trickery?

The political influence of the marabuts steadily increased under the successors of Askia the Great, and we have shown them remonstrating with the unnatural sons of the unhappy old man. The turn taken by their authority is interesting and unexpected, for it represents what we to-day call 'public opinion,' and we are about to see the Songhoi kings showing themselves singularly susceptible to its influence.

'The king, Askia Moussa,' relates the *Tarik*, 'having been defeated in the countries of Lake Chad and obliged to take to flight with his army, said to his generalissimo, "In spite of all the anguish of defeat, it is less painful to me to endure than is the thought of what will pass in Timbuctoo when the news of my disaster reaches there. The agitators will gather together behind the mosque of Sankoré and say, Young men, have you heard what is passing in Kanta? The king has been forced to fly lest he and his army should perish. They whom he has fought would annihilate him!—I can hear them as plainly as though I were there."'

Other anecdotes show us the marabuts treating the royal

authority with a freedom which savours of insolence. The sovereigns, on the other hand, display a great lack of spirit, and by the sixteenth century the pious scholars have become a politically dangerous and turbulent element.

It was this which brought upon them the Moorish exile; their

BEHIND THE MOSQUE OF SANKORÉ

conquerors, although Mussulmans, soon saw that the mosque constituted their sole danger. It was undoubtedly at the instigation of the marabuts that Timbuctoo revolted against the foreign garrison, and the pasha Mahmoud employed a soldier's method (that is to say, a radical one) of quelling these priests. He arrested a great number of them, with their families, and despoiled them or their wealth, which had become considerable. A certain propor-

tion were massacred, and the rest, after five months' imprisonment, were exiled to Morocco (1594).

Their misfortunes surpassed those endured by their ancestors under Sunni Ali, for they were dragged in chains through the desert and incarcerated at Marrakesh. Though they had abused their power in the days of prosperity, they did not succumb to the blows of adversity. So far from humiliating themselves before their merciless conquerors, the firm and haughty demeanour they maintained excites our admiration. One of them, finding death to be near, charged his companions to deliver a sealed letter to the sultan, which contained these words: 'Thou art the oppressor and I am the oppressed, but oppressor and oppressed alike shall stand before the Eternal Judge.'

However regrettable this exile may be from its consequences to the Sudan, it does not lack great historical interest. It is the touchstone which enables us to test the eulogies concerning Sudanese science and learning contained in the native documents, for we now see the scholars of Sankoré confronted by the highest developments of Arabian civilisation. How will they stand the ordeal? The test proves entirely to their advantage.

Among the exiles was a learned doctor, Ahmed Baba by name, born in 1556 at Arawan, of Senhadjan[1] Berber parentage. In spite of his youth, he enjoyed a considerable reputation in Timbuctoo at the time of the Moorish conquest, and his brethren gave him the title of 'The Unique Pearl of his Time.' His renown increased in Morocco and became universal, spreading from Marrakesh to Bougie, Tunis, and even to Tripoli. The Arabs of the north called this negro 'very learned and very magnanimous,' and his gaolers found him 'a fount of erudition.' At the request of

[1] This tribe of Senhadja spread very freely over the south-west of Africa, and it is from them that Senegal takes its name.

the Moorish scholars the doors of his prison were opened a year after his arrival (1596). All the believers were greatly pleased with his release, and he was conducted in triumph from his prison to the principal mosque of Marrakesh. A great many of the learned men urged him to open a course of instruction. His first thought was to refuse, but overcome by their persistence he accepted a post in the Mosque of the Kerifs and taught rhetoric, law, and theology. An extraordinary number of pupils attended his lectures, and questions of the gravest importance were submitted to him by the magistracy, his decision always being treated as final. With a modesty worthy of his learning, he said concerning these decisions: 'I carefully examined from every point of view the questions asked me, and having little confidence in my own judgment I entreated the assistance of God, and the Lord graciously enlightened me.'

The ancient histories of Morocco relate many other interesting details, and the author of the *Bedzl el Mouasaha* reports the following utterance of Ahmed Baba: 'Of all my friends I had the fewest books, and yet when your soldiers despoiled me they took 1600 volumes.' The Nozhel el Hadj gives the following instance of the courage and pride of the negro sheik: 'After he was set at liberty Ahmed Baba presented himself at the palace of El Mansour, and the sultan gave audience to him from behind a curtain. "God has declared in the Koran," said the sheik, "that no human being can communicate with Him hidden behind a veil. If it is your wish to speak to me, come forth from behind that curtain." When El Mansour raised the curtain and approached him, Ahmed Baba continued, "What need had you to sack my house, steal my books, and put me into chains to bring me to Morocco? By means of those chains I fell from my camel and broke my leg." "We wished to establish unity in the Mussulman world," replied

the sultan, "and since you were one of the most distinguished representatives of Islam in your country, we expected your submission to be followed by that of your fellow-citizens." "If that is so, why did you not seek to establish this unity amongst the Turks of Tlemcen and other places nearer to you?" "Because the Prophet says, Leave the Turks in peace so long as they do not interfere with thee." "That was true at one time," responded Ahmed Baba, "but since then Iba Abbas has said, Leave not the Turks in peace even though they should not interfere with thee." El Mansour, being unable to reply to this, put an end to the audience.'

Although apparently free, Ahmed Baba was detained in Morocco for twelve years; the sultan had only released him on that condition, fearing the effect of his influence on his fellow-citizens. It was not until after the death of El Mansour that permission was obtained from his son for the learned man to return to the Sudan. Ahmed Baba then set out for the country to which he had so ardently desired to return, and of which he never spoke without tears in his eyes. The following verses were written by him in his exile:—

'O thou who goest to Gao, turn aside from thy path to breathe my name in Timbuctoo. Bear thither the greeting of an exile who sighs for the soil on which his friends and family reside. Console my near and dear ones for the deaths of their lords, who have been entombed.'

The principal marabuts of Marrakesh formed him a guard of honour at his departure, and, at the moment of farewell, one of them seized Ahmed Baba by the hand and saluted him with the following sûra from the holy book: 'Certainly he who has made the Koran for thee shall lead thee back to thy point of departure' —a customary address to a traveller in wishing him a safe return.

On hearing these words, the sheik abruptly withdrew his hand, exclaiming, 'May God never bring me back to this meeting, nor make me return to this country!'

He reach Timbuctoo in safety, and died in 1627.[1] A man of great learning and a prolific writer, the names of twenty of his books have been handed down to us. Except for an astronomical treatise, written in verse, and some commentaries on the holy texts, his books are chiefly elucidations of the law and the sciences he professed, and prove that he was above everything a jurist. Two of his works alone possess general interest; they have been preserved, happily, and I was enabled to bring copies of them away with me. One is entitled the *Miraz*, and is a little book upon the different negraic peoples, written by Ahmed Baba in exile, with a view to making the Sudanese populations known to the Moors. The other is *El Ibtihadj*, a large biographical dictionary of the Mussulman doctors of the Malekite sect; in it Ahmed Baba carried on the famous work of Ibn Ferhoun, and made it a continuation of the latter's *Dibadje*. The learned biographer added to it the lives of all the scholars whom Ibn Ferhoun had not mentioned. Ahmed Baba completed his book in 1596, and it had such a great success in both northern and negraic Africa that the author was obliged to publish a popular edition containing the principal biographies only.[2]

It is partly owing to the *Ibtihadj* that it has been possible to reconstruct the intellectual past of Timbuctoo, and for this reason the name of Ahmed Baba deserves to be held in pious memory by our savants, as it is by those of the Arabian countries of Northern

[1] He was buried beside his father, Sidi Ahmed, whose tomb is still to be seen to the north of Timbuctoo.

[2] A copy of this book is to be found among the manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Orscela, No. 4628. It was found in Algeria by M. Cherbonneau, who has published some very interesting extracts.

Africa. To this day his name represents to the latter every effort made by the Sudan to attain the intellectual level of the Mussulman world; so much so, in fact, that any Sudanese work of unknown parentage is attributed to him.

The family of Ahmed Baba is not yet extinct, and I found some of his descendants living near the mosque of Sankoré in a house of considerable size, which had been, I was told, the home of their ancestor. One of his great-great-grandchildren, Ahmadou Baba Boubakar, is kadi, and enjoys a considerable reputation for learning; the other, Oumaro Baba, lives by making copies of books, which he executes in a very beautiful handwriting. The family religiously preserve a chair which had belonged to their glorious progenitor, to whom it had been presented by his liberator, the Sultan El Zidan. A curious family tradition is connected with this venerated piece of furniture. On the occasion of the marriage of a member of the family, the bridegroom is permitted to seat himself in this chair on the day of his nuptials. It is hoped, they told me, that some of the great qualities of the illustrious sheik will fall upon the husband and his descendants.

That sixteenth century, which we saw end so disastrously for the marabuts, formed the apogee of Timbuctoo's scientific and literary grandeur. The wholesale arrest and exportation of her scholars proved a fatal blow to the university of Sankoré. The decline of learning, as of everything else, set in with the Moorish occupation, and yet the greatest work of all the literature of the Sudan was produced in the first days of its twilight, namely, that *Tarik é Soudan* (the History of the Sudan) which we have so often had occasion to mention.

The Orientalists have long been on the watch for this precious book, whose existence had been signalled to them from Tripoli,

ORATORY OF SIDI YAIA

Algeria, and Morocco, and which had been unanimously attributed to Ahmed Baba.

The explorer Barth, who was the first to reveal some of its fragments, confirmed this error. How could a man so well informed on Arabian subjects be so completely deceived? The very extracts collected by him refute this paternity, for they cite Ahmed Baba as an authority. But the learned German is not to be embarrassed by such a trifle. 'It is the custom of these Arabs,' he observes, 'to quote themselves.'

If he had read the entire book with more attention, he would have seen that the date—year, month, and day—of Ahmed Baba's death is mentioned by the author, and that elsewhere he gives a very circumstantial account of himself and his belongings. His name is Abderrahman (ben Abdallah, ben Amran, ben Amar) Sadi el Timbucti, and he was born at Timbuctoo (the 'object of his affections'), of one of those families in which science and piety are transmitted as a patrimony. In mentioning the death of an illustrious professor, he observes that he, Abderrahman, was his pupil; and from this we may gather that his youth was spent in study. He arrived at the age of manhood somewhere between 1625 and 1635, at a time when the power of the pashas of Timbuctoo was on the wane. The Moors had intermarried with the native populations, and, instead of persecuting the sheiks as formerly, they protected them, and made use of them when they were in need of intelligent and devoted men. We can see with what consideration a learned man like Abderrahman Sadi was treated; and the account of his journey to Massina and the regions of the Upper Niger shows the high reputation he enjoyed, not only in Timbuctoo, but in all the countries which shared the intellectual life of that city. Wherever he went he was received with joy, covered with marks of respect, and overwhelmed with presents.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

In 1631 he was nominated iman of the mosque of Jenne. Deprived later of the honour by the kadi of the town, 'a man who rejoiced in exactions and injustice,' he returned to Timbuctoo, where society consoled him for his mortification by the most heartfelt marks of sympathy. He relates that when he visited the kadi of this city, 'he arose from his seat as soon as he saw me, and, taking me by the hand, he seated me upon the chair he had just vacated.'

Abderrahman Sadi lived sometimes at Timbuctoo and sometimes at Jenne, being employed on negotiations and missions by the pashas, and engaged as secretary to one of their number. He also occupied his time in giving lectures and holding conferences, and, above all, he undertook the great historical work which embraced all the countries of the Niger. Thanks to his voyages, his official functions, and his personal position, he had access to all existing documents, so many of which have disappeared in the toil and tumults of centuries. This work, to which he consecrated the last years of his life, is inestimably precious.

The *Tarik é Soudan* is conceived upon a perfectly clear and logical plan, according to the most correct rules of literary composition. Nothing is lacking, not even a preface, which I will quote because it shows, among other things, the very clear, perhaps exaggerated, estimate the author had of the decadence of the empire :

'Praise be to God whom the weight of a pearl upon the earth does not escape. May prayer and salvation be with the Master of the first and last, our Lord Mohammed. We know that our ancestors took pleasure in mentioning the companions of the Prophet and the saints, the sheiks and eminent kings of their country, with their lives, their edifices, and the great events of their reigns. They have told us all that they have seen, or heard, of the times extending behind us.

'As for the present time, no one is to be found to take an interest in these things or follow the path traced by their ancestors. Witnessing the decline of this science (history), so precious on account of the instruction it offers to mankind, I have implored the assistance of God in writing down all that I have read, seen, or heard concerning the kings of the Sudan and the Songhoi people, and in relating their history and the events connected with their expeditions of war. I shall speak of Timbuctoo and of its foundation, of the princes who have wielded the power of that city, I shall mention the learned and pious men who dwelt therein, and I shall continue this history to the close of the dominion of the sultans of Morocco.'

After this prelude he opens his history at the earliest date known to him, and notices the origin of the Songhoi kingdom, the founding of Jenne and Timbuctoo, and of the empires of Ganata and Mali. He rapidly and clearly familiarises the reader with the principal towns and peoples which are to figure in his narrative, and he enters fully into his subject with Sunni Ali. We are taken as far as the year 1653, and given an excellent idea of Foulbes, Touaregs, Mossi, and Ouolofs by the way. He dilates upon Morocco and the kingdom of Massina, adds a series of biographies of saints and scholars, and appends his own *curriculum vitæ*.

He does not consider his work ended with the task he set himself to do, however, and the historian takes up the pen of the annalist. 'What shall happen hereafter I will relate in the same manner as that which is past, for as long as I shall be alive,' says the last page of the *Tarik*. An appendix enumerates all the events until 1656, which we may take to have been the year of his death.

Such is the plan of the important work which served as my

charming and picturesque guide through the Sudan. It forms, with the exception of the holy writings, the favourite volume of the negro, and is known to the furthest extremity of western Africa, from the shores of the Niger to the borders of Lake Chad. Barth discovered fragments of it at Gando, and I heard it spoken of in Senegal. I found an excellent copy in Jenne, and had a duplicate made from it, which was corrected from an example at Timbuctoo, so that we possess the book in as complete a form as possible.[1]

Its style is very simple and clear, entirely lacking those literary artifices so much in vogue among the Arabs; and the author displays an unusual conscientiousness, never hesitating to give both versions of a doubtful event. His biography of the great infidel, Sunni Ali, shows him to be sufficiently impartial, and his book is above everything remarkable for the admirable philosophy (Islamic, be it understood) pervading it. It is a work of elevated morals, and is particularly adapted to exercise a happy influence upon the negraic mind; for Abderrahman is not content with a mere narration of events—he explains them, and that without having recourse to the convenient fatalism of the Mussulman who says of a calamitous event, 'It was written.' He accounts for incidents as being the reward of God when they are fortunate, and as the punishment of such and such a crime when they are disastrous. Severe towards all infractions of the divine law by kings and humble alike, and sternly stigmatising all cruelty, he relates every good action with obvious pleasure, and exalts all forms of courage, especially the civic. The whole book is a collection of active morals, and is one of the most charming of its kind,

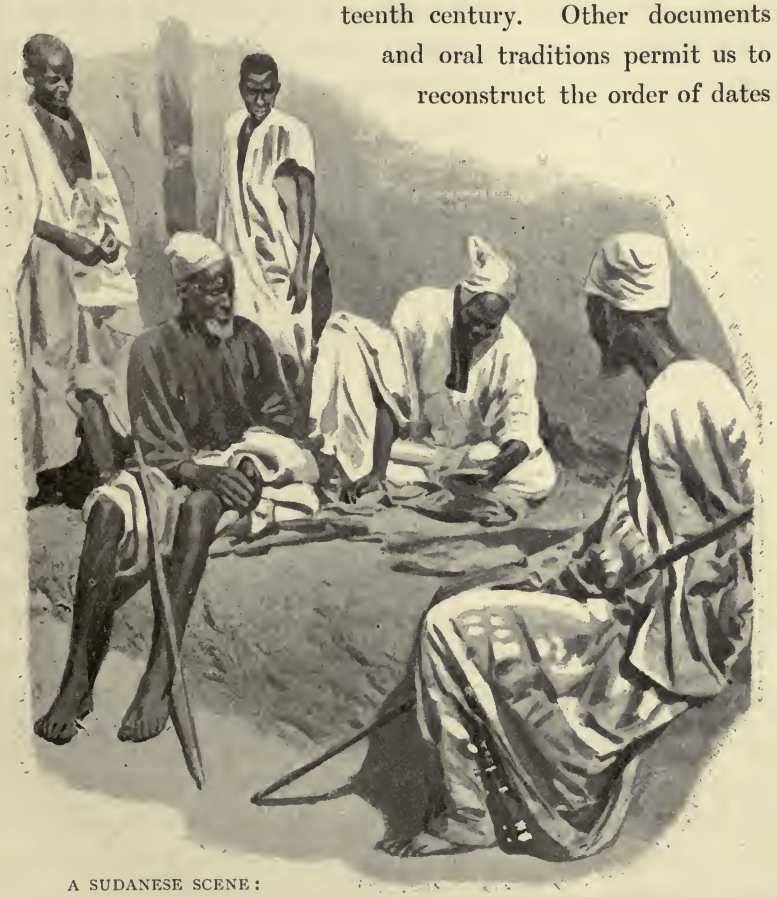
[1] M. Houdas, the eminent Professor of the Oriental School of Languages, is preparing a complete translation.

for fables, marvels, and miracles are agreeably intermingled with real events.

I will remark further that the *Tarik* is to this day the Hozier of the Sudan. In addition to the attractions to be found in its pages, it contains a charm which entirely escapes the Sudanese, and which we alone are privileged to taste, viz. the *naïveté*, good-nature, and delicious sincerity which pervade the book. Like Homer, Abderrahman sometimes wanders astray, pen in hand. Side by side with the gravest events he mentions that 'a white crow appeared from the 22nd of Rebia to the 28th of Djoumada, on which day the children caught and killed it.' Elsewhere in the narratives of his voyage to Massina, one of his hosts gave him his daughter in marriage. He was fifty years of age at the time, and in possession of several other wives. Not content with imparting the event to posterity, he adds, 'My union with Fatima was concluded on the twelfth day of Moharrem, 1645, but the marriage was not consummated until Friday the sixteenth.' I believe he would have given us his washing-bills if the use of body linen had been familiar to the Sudanese. His book admirably reflects the life and mind of the Sudan of yesterday. One enjoys from its pages the delicate repasts offered by Homer, Herodotus, and Froissard, and it is for this reason I have called the *Tarik* the *chef-d'œuvre* of Sudanese literature.

I found and brought away from Timbuctoo other historical works composed at later date, upon the model of the *Tarik*. One of them is called the *Diwan el Moulouk*, *fi Salatin es Sudan* (Divan of Kings, a book on the Sultans of the Sudan), and narrates the events occurring between 1656 and 1747; the name of the author is unknown. Another book, on the contrary, has no title, but is known to us by the name of its

author, Mouley Rhassoun. He resumes the *Diwan* from the last date given in its pages and carries it up to the year 1769, so that we are well instructed up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Other documents and oral traditions permit us to reconstruct the order of dates



A SUDANESE SCENE:
A READING IN THE STREET

and events, and, in its broad outlines at least, the whole of the Sudanese past is known to us.

Although these two books are precious for their historical value, they entirely lack the literary merits which charm us in

the *Tarik*. Intellectual decadence has made rapid strides since the eighteenth century, and the author of the *Diwan* states in his first pages:

'The men of my generation have arrived at the point where their intellects possess nothing. As for the old men, those who know the deeds of their ancestors are few and far between, and those possessing any intelligence at all are equally rare. When I question them concerning what is passing in the town, they are incapable of making a response of any interest.'

His narrative reveals the fact that he himself was betrayed into the errors he deplores. His style is full of faults, the pages are encumbered with repetitions, and the interest of the narrative gradually declines. The work of Mouley Rhassoun is still more feeble, consisting entirely of dry records and obituary notices.

'Why did they not write more books and abandon records?' was the question I asked the marabuts at Timbuctoo. 'We have no men among us clever enough to do so,' they answered. 'Nor can we devote ourselves exclusively to science; we cannot buy books nor travel to complete our learning in Cairo, Fez, or elsewhere, for to-day we are the poorest people in the country. Formerly the people noted the most uninteresting things; they counted the number of days on which rain fell in winter; they mentioned that such-and-such a person was going to marry so-and-so. For Ahmed Baba had taught the importance of the science of facts and dates.[1] When the town was rich and every one sought to please the marabuts, they were well clothed and

[1] The following encounter took place between the chief of chiefs Omar and a Jew who brought him a document in which the Prophet commanded the exemption from taxation of the people of Khaibar (a Jewish town in Arabia). This document was accompanied by the testimony of the companions of the Prophet, Ali Ibn Abm Thaleb among others. These documents were brought to the chief of chiefs, and caused great astonishment to all people. They were shown to Aben Bekr, a prudent man and endowed with a wonderful memory. He reflected a moment, then said, 'All

fed, they could give themselves to meditation and read books and write them. But for the last hundred years there have been nothing but wars and ruin. We have only known peace since the arrival of the French. We marabuts have to run about right and left to procure a livelihood, the education of children brings us in so little. Sometimes we are asked to write talismans and to copy books, but that does not give us sufficient to live upon. Many are obliged to devote themselves to commerce; and, absorbed by the care of not dying of hunger, how can they find time to write?'

I have shown the town of yesterday, Timbuctoo the great, under all its aspects.

Let us now allow our imaginations to be carried back to the days of its splendour. Let us picture the caravans of Morocco, Tuat, and Tripoli travelling for weeks and months across that immensity of sands 'where the very birds lose themselves.' The sun blazes fiercely in the flaming sky, the skin cracks, and the lips are parched. All the water to be had is warm and impure, and even then cannot be procured in sufficient quantities. A scaly viper occasionally crosses the route, and at long intervals the swift flight of an antelope is seen.

For days and months nothing rejoices the eye save the deceitful vision of the mirage, until Taoudenni, the great halting-place, the city of salt, has been reached.

One morning three little black spots show upon the burning

this is a lie.' 'How so?' they asked him. 'I find the evidence of Mo'awai in this document,' he replied, 'and Mo'awai did not embrace Islamism until the year of the capture of Khaibar. I also see the testimony of Sá'ad ben Mo'adh, and he died on the day of Bani-Karaide before the capture of Khaibar.' This incident greatly amused the people.

The above anecdote is related by Ahmed Baba in the beginning of his *Ibtihadj*.

horizon. The camels cease to grumble, they roar; and, as the three minarets grow clearer, Timbuctoo displays her majestic form. Behold her gardens, her palm-trees, and her gleaming waters! The town is three times as large as it is to-day, the streets are fresh and blue under the shade of the great trees, and they seethe with the life of its fifty thousand inhabitants.

In place of the solitude, abandonment, and misery of to-day, it presents the traveller with a satiety of everything desirable. With abundance of water and shade, it represents the saving help of the word of God, the charm of the word of man, the wealth of gold and ivory, the sweetness of honey and a profusion of smiles. . . . I have been told that men went temporarily mad upon seeing it for the first time.

Can we not understand how it was that the men of Tripoli, Tunis, Algeria, and Fez, having experienced its pleasures for one day only, have celebrated the splendours of Timbuctoo to their last hour, and how it was that their narratives, reaching Europe, gave birth to the legend of the fabulous city?

CHAPTER XV

EUROPE AND TIMBUCTOO

All who have studied the remarkable genius of Colbert proclaim his ideas to have been greatly in advance of his century. It will not surprise us, therefore, to find his name among the first of those who attempted to open the gates of Timbuctoo to Europe.

The great minister acquired a very clear apprehension of the value of the Sudan from a report made by André Bruc, governor of the African colonies, and he conceived the notion of reaching Timbuctoo by way of Senegal. This plan, which received the approbation of Louis XIV., was precisely that followed by Faidherbe forty years ago, continued by Borgnis-Desbordes and Archinard, and finally completed in the last days of 1894.

We shall see later on how Lieutenant Boiteux took possession of Timbuctoo in the name of France, and how the tricolour was hoisted in the town for the first time by one of his sailors. Now, if ever, we might say, 'It was written,'—for the first European to see Timbuctoo was also a Frenchman and a sailor, Paul Imbert, who was born on the sands of Olonne. I must add that his journey thither was purely involuntary. He was shipwrecked on the coast of Morocco, captured by the Arabs, and sold as a slave to a Portuguese renegade in the service of the sultan. His master, sent on a mission by the Moorish government, took the old sailor with him to Timbuctoo in 1670. Paul Imbert contrived to send

news of his misfortunes to Europe, but died in captivity before it was possible to effect his release.

The third name connected with Timbuctoo is that of Mungo Park. Starting from Gambia, he succeeded in reaching the Niger at Segu, and was the first European to see the great river of Western Africa (1795). He published a most attractive account of the Niger, which is doubled in value by the solid information of the writer. His book was the point of departure for numerous explorations into this portion of Africa in the early part of the present century, and is still well worth reading. The Sudan is shown at a relatively normal period, and the picture is drawn by an interesting and competent pen.

The giant river exercised the same fascination upon Mungo Park which was experienced by myself, and which I have attempted to describe, and he soon returned to it with the intention of descending the river to its mouth (1805). He was accompanied by forty Europeans—thirty-five English soldiers, four carpenters, and an artist named Scott. This little troop, considerably lessened in number by fever, reached the Niger at Bammaku. I found very vivid recollections of Mungo Park below this town. He had been well provided with merchandise, and had displayed a generosity in dealing with the people which had deeply impressed itself on their memories. They naturally do not speak of him by his real name, which could have no meaning for them, and would have been difficult to remember; but like all the early Europeans who ventured into those parts, he was given a picturesque sobriquet, and called *Bonciba-tigui*, 'the man with the large beard' (literally: *batigui*, owner; *bonci*, beard; *ba*, large).

The natives also spoke of him at Samba-Marcalla, a charming little town built under large and beautiful trees, upon the left bank of the Niger, between Nyamina and Segu. The traveller

spent several days here, tempted doubtless by his warm reception and the blue shade in which the quiet life of its inhabitants was passed. In acknowledgment of their hospitality Park presented the mosque with a Chinese vase, with which to adorn the summit of its minaret, and this ornament was still to be seen in 1888. One day, the gunboats having dropped anchor before Samba-Marcalla, their commanders, MM. Hourst and Davout, induced the inhabitants to exchange the vase for another, and the traveller's gift was brought to France and placed in the Colonial Office. Learning further that one of the companions of 'the man with the great beard' had died at Samba-Marcalla, our officers had the grave of the Englishman pointed out to them, and their gunners forged a fine iron cross, which marks the resting-place of the unknown to this day. It bears the following inscription:—

TO THE MEMORY
OF ONE OF THE COMPANIONS OF
MUNGO PARK
WHO WAS BURIED HERE
The Niger Fleet. November 1888.

According to a tradition transmitted to the inhabitants of Samba-Marcalla, Mungo Park's companions were at this time reduced to seven.

Permission to enter Segu being refused him, the explorer went on to Sansanding. He met with a better reception there, and was the guest of Kounta-Mamadi, the richest merchant of the town, and grandfather of the present chief, who told me that Park had been greatly liked by the inhabitants. He had sold them merchandise and made little presents to the children; a saw which had been given by him to his host has been carefully preserved by the family.

Having journeyed hitherto by land, Mungo Park embarked

upon the Niger at Sansanding in a large, flat-bottomed boat he had had constructed; and from there, ignorant of which of the many possible routes he had taken to reach Timbuctoo, I found it difficult to trace him. He was spoken of at Kabara, but he had

CROSS RAISED TO ONE OF THE COMPANIONS OF MUNGO PARK

not been able to reach that port on account of the hostilities of the Touaregs, who attacked him at Koriouma.

Mungo Park was therefore obliged to turn his back upon Timbuctoo, and Barth found traces of him at Bamba, Bourroum, and Gao. The appearance of the white man with the great beard and his large boat has become a legend on the shores of the Eastern Niger, and the end of the courageous explorer is well known. His boat was smashed upon the rocks of the Boussa rapids, at a comparatively short distance from the mouth of the

Niger, and the brave Scotsman and his four or five remaining companions were drowned.

The soldiers and considerable sums of money placed at Mungo Park's disposal prove how much the Nigerian countries interested England at this time. She made repeated efforts to penetrate Western Africa between 1810 and 1825, the most remarkable being conducted by Major Laing, aide-de-camp to the governor of Sierra Leone. This young officer also succeeded in making his way to the Niger, reaching it at Falaba. He, too, was a Scotsman, as powerfully constituted and well-informed as his compatriot, and was looked upon by England as a second Mungo Park. His government provided him with large resources, and the mission of attaining Timbuctoo was confided to him in 1825.

His first voyage having familiarised him with the negraic countries, Laing preferred to take the northern route in his second, and traverse the Arabian and Berber countries. Starting from Tripoli, he passed through Ghadames, Tuat, Oualata, and Arawan, was attacked in the desert by the Touaregs, and reached Timbuctoo in August 1828.

I have collected fresh details concerning his stay there and his death. Although they are somewhat at variance with the generally accepted account, I do not hesitate to vouch for them, as they came from an excellent source. They were communicated to me by the most learned man in Timbuctoo, the alamany, or religious chief of the town, and grand iman of the great mosque of Ghingaraber. He was an old man, bent with age and almost blind, but of still reliable intelligence and well versed in the traditions of the town. He had obtained his facts from his uncle, Alpha Saidou, who was grand kadi and judge of Timbuctoo at the

time of the Scotsman's stay there, and was therefore in a position to be well informed.

Laing, who was known under the name of *El Rais*, the chief (given him, doubtless, on account of his rank as major), presented himself as an envoy from the English government to the chief of the town, Osman-Alcaidi ben Alcaidi Boubakar. According to custom, the latter offered him one of his houses as a dwelling, which, thanks to the alamany, whose uncle Saidou had also lived in it, I was enabled to see. The family being extinct in the direct line, the house became, according to custom, the property of the chief of the town.

It is situated in a little square near the great market and the mosque of Ghingaraber, and is surrounded by the usual shabby, dilapidated houses and straw huts with straw enclosures. On one side of the square an oblong mound of masonry represents the

LAING'S HOUSE

tomb of some saint, or Oualiou. The house appears to have been one story high, and of good size, but I found it in the process of demolition.[1] The façade was destroyed, and the first

[1] I procured from its destroyers a little wooden Moorish window belonging to the upper story, in which the traveller lived during his stay. I brought away the poor relic, which is in every way worthy of a place in the Greenwich Hospital by the side of the mementoes of the Franklin Polar expedition.

floor, by falling in, had warned its inhabitants that it was time to begin repairs. The masons were clearing away the ruins, leaving the thick walls of the ground floor standing ready for rebuilding, and the square was encumbered with bricks drying in the sun.

The Touaregs having extorted a ransom, but not pillaged him, Laing arrived with considerable baggage, and was able to make the usual presents to the chief of the town. He explained that he had been sent by his government to see the commerce and life of the city, that the white people wished to make acquaintance with the inhabitants of countries unknown to them, and establish friendly relations which could only result in good to both sides. Such a task had often been confided to him before. The second day after his arrival he was to be seen exploring the town, taking notes, drawing great lines (plans?) upon paper, and questioning the passers-by.

The chief of the town entered into relations with him, and visited him pretty frequently; but the other inhabitants, great and small, maintained a marked reserve. His questions had excited great suspicion; and he seems to have committed the error of not taking all and sundry into his confidence, and elaborately explaining his presence and business to them. 'He did not know how to gain the confidence of the people,' the old alamany told me. 'He did not talk to them and amuse them. If he had done so, he would have had friends in the town, and they would have warned him of what was being plotted against him. Now, every one is aware that you are neither soldier nor merchant, and we all know that you want to see everything and hear everything and read our books, not to do us harm, but to tell the white people the history of the blacks. Every one comes to you, your house is far from the fort, and you live alone with your servant. Well, if any

one conspired against you, certainly I, or one of those who know you, would warn you.'

The people were afraid of Laing and his notes and questions, and the surname of *El Rais* doubtless added to their fears. The unhappy man did nothing to offend or shock the inhabitants, and no one had any reproach to bring against him, but all unanimously agreed that the suspicion of his being a spy had finally roused the hostility of the people. This was evidently the real cause of his death, and not, as was supposed, the fact of his being a Christian.

Some days before his departure Laing determined to visit Kabara, and persisted in riding there after nightfall, in spite of the warnings of his host as to the insecurity of the road. This last imprudence seems to have been decisive. 'He is undoubtedly a spy,' thought the inhabitants, and, urged by the populace, the notables of the town planned the murder of the stranger. His host, the chief of the town, was charged with his arrest. Being asked by Laing (who had decided to return by Arawan) to procure him a guide, Osman-Alcaidi sent for the chief of the Berabichs, a Moorish tribe encamped in the neighbourhood. To this man, Sidi Mohammed Habeida (grandfather of the present chief), the Alcaidi confided the anxieties of the town, and requested him to dispose of the European, body and goods.

The witnesses are unanimously agreed upon this point, the Berabichs did not kill Laing upon their own initiative, nor because he was a Christian, but at the formal request of the chief of Timbuctoo. This new version is evidently the true one; for if in certain cases interest may compel them to disguise the truth, it would clearly have been to the interest of the natives, in this instance, to put all the responsibility of the murder upon the shoulders of the Berabichs, and not charge themselves with it.

Mohammed Habeida made no difficulty about accepting a part which did no violence to the pillaging instincts of his tribe, and Laing left Timbuctoo under his guidance. For two days they travelled together towards Arawan, and the unfortunate man was killed at dawn on the third day.

Laing's visit and the circumstances accompanying it are still vividly impressed upon the memories of the inhabitants; for, at the instance of England I believe, the Sultan of Morocco made an inquiry at Timbuctoo concerning his death. At that time the authorities naturally did not care to assume the responsibility of the deed, and would certainly shift it on to the backs of the Berabichs. In this way the version which made Laing a victim of the fanaticism of the desert was accepted.

One of his last letters announced that he had collected numerous manuscripts on the subject of Timbuctoo, and these precious documents naturally occupied the mind of the scientists and explorers a good deal. Réné Caillié made inquiries concerning them, and reported that they had been dispersed among the inhabitants of the desert. Barth raised the question twenty-five years later, and was told that not one remained. Lenz, on the contrary, believes that the papers and effects are still preserved in Arawan. Since our installation in Timbuctoo, the military authorities have made several attempts to discover the fate of these letters from envoys sent by the chief of the Berabichs. M. Josse, the Arabian interpreter, was especially persevering, but in vain; the Berabichs insisted that nothing remained in their possession. For my part, I made the acquaintance, during my stay, of an agent of the Mossi, with whom I was at pains to be on excellent terms, and who rendered me many little services. One evening I sent for him, and, with air of great mystery, offered him a large sum of money if he would find

the papers of *El Rais* and bring them to me. I assured him that no one in the town, European or native, should know anything about it; but in spite of all my diplomacy, I was no more successful than the rest. Some time afterwards he assured me that the tribe possessed neither papers nor anything else belonging to the traveller. Knowing the keen distrust of these people, however, and the fear of punishment they still entertain (in spite of repeated assurances), and, knowing too, the great respect with which all written matter is regarded in these countries, I do not think all hope need be abandoned.

If the first explorer to reach Timbuctoo was an Englishman, the first to come back from it was a Frenchman—Réné Caillié, to wit. As was proved by the Grand Prix of 10,000 francs offered by the Geographical Society of Paris to the first visitor from Timbuctoo, the interest to Europe consisted in the return.

Behold the perversity of things, or, if you will, the ways of Providence. Mungo Park and Laing departed accompanied by the good wishes and encouragement of their countrymen, well provided with money, merchandise, and escort—and failed. Success was reserved for a humble and solitary man of ridiculously small means who had been contemptuously repulsed by the representatives of his country, and who had scarcely a friend to press his hand at parting.

'I was born,' says Réné Caillié, 'in 1800 at Mauzé, in the department of the two Sèvres, of poor parents, whom I had the misfortune to lose in my childhood. I was apprenticed to a trade as soon as I could read and write, but it was not long before I wearied of it, thanks to the books of travel which I read in all my leisure moments. I borrowed geographical works; and the maps of Africa, in which I saw deserts and unknown regions marked,

excited my keenest interest. Finally, the interest became a passion to which I sacrificed everything.'

He started for Senegal at the age of sixteen with a fortune of sixty francs in his pocket. Of the two vessels starting on the same day for the same port, he had the good luck to choose the one which arrived safely; the other, the *Medusa*, made a notable shipwreck.

He disembarked at St. Louis (1816), where nothing was being talked of but the English expeditions into the interior. He made an attempt to join one of these, but a French officer dissuaded him and sent him to Guadeloupe, where he obtained a small employment which kept him at Point à Pitre for six months. The narratives of Mungo Park having fallen into his hands, he returned to Senegal at the end of that time, more absorbed in Africa than ever.

This brings us to the year 1818, and the English have in no wise relaxed their efforts to penetrate the interior. The expedition of Major Grey was just succeeding to that of Majors Peddie and Campbell, and Réné Caillié attached himself to it 'without appointment or engagement of any kind,' happy in only being allowed to start. The Europeans were all mounted, but he had to make the journey on foot; and if he did not share the comforts of his companions, he certainly had his part of the dangers and sickness, for on his return he was obliged to go back to France to recruit his health.

These hardships proved no discouragement, however, and he returned to Senegal in a small sloop in 1824. He entered into trade upon his arrival, and his business prospered; but this was not what he had come for. It was not a fortune that he wanted; as he says himself, 'Timbuctoo had become the one object of my thoughts, the aim of all my efforts, and I was determined to reach it or die in the attempt.'

He neglected nothing to ensure the success of this great enterprise. Realising that a knowledge of Arabic and the forms of the Mohammedan religion was essential, he submitted to a second and severer trial. Leaving his business, and attiring himself in Moorish dress, he went to the Braknas Moors with the request that he might live with their tribe and be converted to Islamism. He suffered many annoyances and much ill-treatment, but he learned to talk, read, and write Arabic, and was initiated into the mysteries of the Koran and the Mussulman prayers. He then returned to St. Louis to find the means of putting into execution his plan of reaching Timbuctoo and travelling across Africa to Egypt, under the guise of a merchant and pilgrim to Mecca.

His real hardships were to begin now; for, instead of being encouraged in his purpose and congratulated upon the task he had achieved, he was received with cold sarcasm at St. Louis. Instead of the 6000 francs he asked for to buy the necessary merchandise, the governor of Senegal allowed him soldier's rations that he might not die of hunger, and found him employment with a salary of fifty francs a month. 'The fatigue and privations I endured had perhaps entitled me to expect something better,' is his sole comment.

A new governor, Baron Roger, arriving in Senegal, Caillié's hopes revived, and for the second time he related his sojourn among the Moors and explained his plans. This is how he tells the story of his attempt :—

'M. Roger pooh-poohed my project, and refused me any pecuniary aid. This would have been a thunderbolt to any one else, but it only had the effect of more deeply rooting my determination. I had the courage to return to the charge, and he was then good enough to promise me a certain sum upon my return from Timbuctoo. . . . Upon my return from Timbuctoo! And

if I died on the way? This idea, terrible to a man who would leave a much-loved sister without help or resources, determined my reply. I refused every arrangement, deciding that if I died, I would at least leave the friend of my childhood one incontestable possession—the merit of having done everything by myself.'

While France refused him 6000 francs, England was spending eighteen million francs in attempting to penetrate from the western coast of Africa. Caillié now turned to the English colony of Sierra Leone, and at once aroused the interest of the governor, General Charles Turner. He obtained, instead of the ridiculous employment offered to him by a Frenchman, the direction of an indigo factory and a salary of 3600 francs. He would probably have succeeded in getting the 6000 francs for his voyage, but the governor objected—very reasonably from an Englishman's point of view—that Major Laing was already *en route* for Timbuctoo, and he could not have a hand in depriving him of the glory of being there first.

Caillié succeeded in saving 2000 francs, however, and was no longer affected by the refusal. Having resumed the Moorish costume, he converted his savings into merchandise, and set out upon his journey (1827).

His stock of goods being too small to permit of his giving himself out to be a trader, as he had first intended, he invented a new pretext. 'Born in Egypt,' he told every one, 'I was taken as a child and made to serve in the French army, which was then in Egypt. I was brought as a slave to France, and my master took me with him to Senegal to assist him in his business. He was so pleased with my services that he gave me my liberty, and now that I am free to go where I will, I naturally desire to return to Egypt to find my parents, and resume the Mussulman

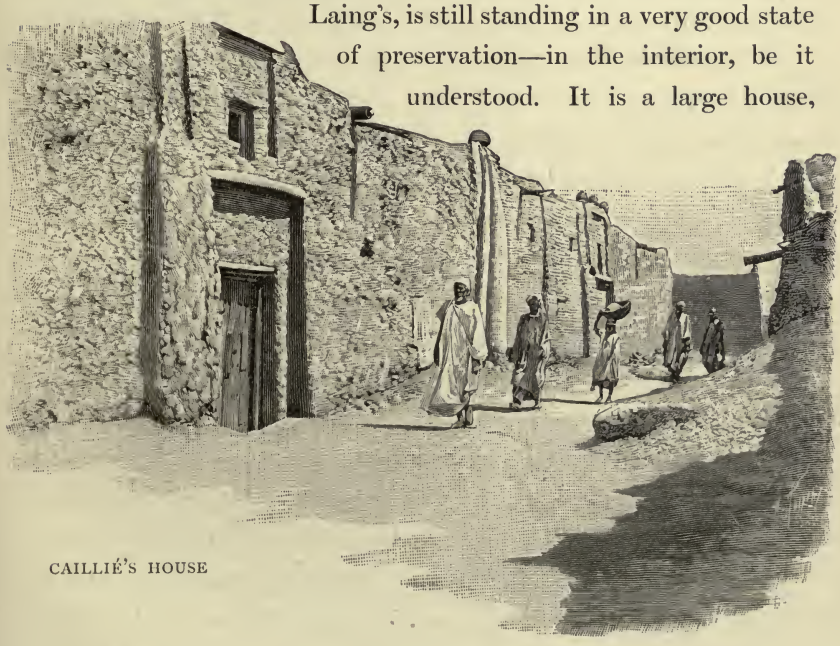
religion.' Thanks to his knowledge of Arabic and the prayers of the Mussulman cult, the fable of his origin was everywhere accepted, and his journey was made comparatively easy. He entered Timbuctoo on the 20th of April 1828, having passed by the Foota Jallon, reached the Niger at Kankan, traversed the Bambara kingdom of Segu, and paused at Jenne by the way.

As Caillié was taken for the man he pretended to be, I found it exceedingly difficult to follow his track. All inquiries at Jenne were fruitless, and I feared they would be equally so at Timbuctoo, for poor Arabian travellers arrive there all the year round, and he had only stayed fourteen days in the city. The name of his host, however, Sidi Abdallah Chabir, one of the most important merchants of his time, was perfectly well remembered. One of his wives had died only within the last few years, and his son but shortly before my arrival. I saw the house in which Caillié had lodged, and the old alamany revived some memories of the explorer himself.

The latter had not failed to impart the history of his Egyptian origin, his misfortunes, and his slavery in France, and I was thus enabled to trace him. The old alamany repeated to me (with some variations) the fable mentioned above as concerning a traveller lodged by Sidi Abdallah. The worthy merchant, an Arab fond of remarkable stories, had been greatly struck by this tale, and, being a pious man into the bargain, he had been deeply touched by the religious zeal of the young Egyptian. From all this Sidi Abdallah had concocted a narrative which he delighted to impart to his friends, and which he accompanied by improving reflections on the tenacity of the Mussulman faith. The history was so often repeated in Timbuctoo that the Grand Kadi, Alpha

Saidou, noted it down as one of the curious episodes of his time. He edited his history under the direction of Sidi Abdallah, and blackened four sheets of paper with it. Although the old alamany had inherited a portion of his uncle's books and papers, this curious manuscript was not among them, he assured me. I requested him to make inquiries of the other inheritors of the kadi, and was then told that the papers had been burnt in a recent fire. This explanation does not appear to merit any great amount of belief, and one day somebody will doubtless be more fortunate than myself. The history was probably embellished with imprecations on the Christians, and they were therefore not over anxious to communicate it to me.

The house pointed out to me as having been lived in by the Egyptian was situated near the market, and in the same street as the one Laing had occupied. His dwelling, more fortunate than Laing's, is still standing in a very good state of preservation—in the interior, be it understood. It is a large house,



CAILLIÉ'S HOUSE

plainly indicating the importance of the man who showed the poor traveller such gracious hospitality. Sidi Abdallah did not live in it himself, but used it as a warehouse. It is now occupied by one of the principal merchants of Timbuctoo, a Moor, like Sidi Abdallah, and he too has converted it into a shop. I, therefore, saw the dwelling under much the same aspect it must have worn to Réné Caillié.

I found, surrounding the two spacious courts, 'the little, long, narrow and windowless rooms, serving indifferently as shop or bedroom,' in one of which Réné Caillié lodged, and in which 'he suffocated day and night.' The interior was encumbered with packages and sacks of all kinds, principally bales of ostrich feathers and ivory. Lances thrust into the floor showed that the men of the Desert occupied those suffocating rooms at the moment. The real proprietor of the house, Mohammed El Bakir, had just received his annual caravan from Tendouf, a Moorish town on the borders of the Sahara. His relations had great troops of camels over there, and they were enabled to continue their commerce in spite of the insecurity of the desert routes, for they belonged to a family of marabuts possessing great influence in the Sahara. I was on excellent terms with Mohammed El Bakir, and he it was who furnished me with some notion of the present state of the commerce of Timbuctoo. He was acquainted with Europeans, having traded with them at Mogador, where it was his custom to buy large quantities of our produce. I was surprised, nevertheless, when he asked me for news of Paris (he pronounced it Parisse). He said he had long known the name of the town, for the rich Moorish Jew who bought his ostrich plumes lived there. His curiosity had been excited by the marvels described to him by a Moor who had visited the city during the exhibition, and he wished to know if he had not been the dupe of a too lively

imagination. I reassured him, of course, and told him the true history of Réné Caillié. To risk one's life and sacrifice one's interests for the simple satisfaction of seeing a new town or country was incomprehensible to him, but he understood, nevertheless, that in our eyes his house was the most interesting thing in Timbuctoo, and I profited by that to advise him to keep it in very particular repair.

Whether it was the considerable sacrifices made by the English Government for Laing, or whether it was owing to the great confidence the public had in this brilliant officer, I do not know, but the English have always expressed great contempt for Réne Caillié's success. Their disdain developed into injustice, and they disputed his journey, his book, and his sojourn in Timbuctoo, professing themselves completely edified when, twenty-five years later, the truth of Caillié's statements was confirmed by a German.

The English Government made a fresh effort to reach the Sudan in 1850. Richardson was equipped at Tripoli with the same munificence that had been allowed to Mungo Park and Laing, and intrusted with the mission of reaching Lake Chad. At the request of Prussia, two Germans were added to the party, one of whom was Doctor Barth.

All his companions having died one after the other, Barth was left to fulfil the mission alone. After exploring the basin of Lake Chad, and discovering the Benue, he pursued the Bournou and Sokoto route, passed Say, crossed the valley of the Niger from south to north, and arrived at Timbuctoo on August 29th, 1853.

His journey was greatly facilitated by his position as English ambassador, and by the rich presents with which he was enabled

to sustain the part. His position at Timbuctoo, however, was extremely critical. There are people still living in the city who remember seeing Barth, or rather Abdel Kerim ('the servant of the Lord'), as he called himself, and I gathered some interesting details from them.

The explorer had counted upon staying at Timbuctoo with a sheikh named El Backay, whose importance had been boasted of and greatly exaggerated to him, and which he in turn exaggerated to Europe. The Backays belonged to the tribe of Kountas. These Berbers, strongly infused with negro blood, were, two centuries ago, still settled to the south of Timbuctoo, in the neighbourhood of Kairwan. From there they emigrated to the desert, spread along the route from Tunis to the Sudan, and settled in Saharian Adrar, a rocky plateau to the north-east of Timbuctoo, near the town of Mabruk. They have since drawn nearer the Niger, and are now to be found in the valley east of Timbuctoo, on both sides of the river.

The Backays were a family of marabuts and scholars, not warriors, and none of them ever had the 'opportunity of mounting the throne,' as Barth has affirmed. They were content to mount the pulpit, and their learning and wisdom have been famous in the desert for over a hundred years. The first to be mentioned in the history of Timbuctoo was Sidi Moktar el Kabir, a man pious to asceticism, in whose eyes smoking was an impurity. He wrote a book entitled *Taraïfa Koubra* (The Great Taraïfa), which is still in the possession of the Kountas, and would be a desirable book to procure, for it contains several historical notices, I am told.

The fame of his wisdom was the cause of his being called to Timbuctoo in the early part of the present century. The last of the Roumas were living on exceedingly bad terms with the Touaregs, and Sidi Moktar, on being invited to adjust their

disputes, settled the tribute to be paid to the veiled men, and the terms to be observed by them in return. He acted as mediator in other circumstances, and his fame and the number of his pupils steadily increased. On his death (1811) every one said, 'He was a saint'; a little chapel was built upon his grave, and pilgrimages were made to his tomb, which still stands on the dunes east of Timbuctoo.

His son, Sidi Mohammed, maintained the family reputation, and died in 1826, leaving several children, the eldest of whom was called Sidi Moktar. The latter also played the part of peace-maker which had been so well sustained by his grandfather. When the Foulbes took possession of Timbuctoo, the populace appealed to him to intercede for them with Cheikou Ahmadou. He succeeded in satisfying both parties so well that the town offered him a large dwelling, the Foulbe king overwhelmed him with gifts and attentions, and he definitely quitted Adrar for Timbuctoo. He was consulted in all disputes between Moors and Touaregs, all controversies between the town and its nomadic neighbours were submitted to his judgment, and he became the recognised arbitrator of these countries. He had no public function, and filled no official post, but was merely a great marabut, enjoying universal consideration, receiving numerous presents from pious people, giving excellent lectures, and followed by many pupils from the Sudan and desert. He, too, was a man of the pen, and composed a history of the Kounta Touaregs and other desert tribes, which he called the *Taraïfa Sochora*, or Little Taraïfa.

On his death in 1847, his son Ahmadi, the child of a slave, succeeded to this honourable and lucrative post, but was ousted by his uncle. The disputes between the two rivals irritated the Foulbe king, who was full of reverence for the defunct, and

greatly diminished the prestige of the family in Timbuctoo. Now, the ambitious uncle was none other than Sheik El Backay, who, having finally got the better of his nephew, endeavoured to restore the family reputation and make himself famous by travelling in the neighbouring countries. He was sojourning in Gundam when the explorer reached Timbuctoo in 1853.

Barth was evidently under the impression that El Backay occupied some commanding position in Timbuctoo. This is the only possible explanation of the attitude he adopted upon his arrival, and his singular want of tact which led to so many disagreeables. Contrary to custom, he visited neither the chief of the town nor the authorities, but contented himself with settling in one of the shiek's houses and awaiting his return there. The town was offended by this want of respect, and so much hostility was displayed that the European was warned not to venture out. This state of affairs lasted a month, and all Barth saw of Timbuctoo was the view of the town he enjoyed from the roof of his house.

Instead of improving, the situation became more critical with the return of El Backay. In 1853 Timbuctoo formed, as we know, a part of the Foulbe empire, and the local authorities had hastened to send a message to Hamadallai, the residence of Ahmadou Ahmadou, to inform him of the arrival of the traveller. Greatly affronted that an ambassador should go to Timbuctoo without offering him homage or the customary presents, without asking permission to enter one of his towns, nor even informing him of his presence, the king sent an order that the stranger should be taken and brought to him. The arrival of this command, with a troop of soldiery charged to execute it, coincided, happily for Barth, with the return of the sheik.

El Backay, greatly flattered by receiving an ambassador,

seeing all the lost prestige he could recover, and delighted to play a trick upon the government which had crossed his ambition, formally and very courageously took Barth under his protection. 'The stranger is in my hand. You must cut it off before you can take him,' was the haughty response he made to the envoys. The whole of Timbuctoo was confounded by this incident. The authorities made many vain attempts to induce El Backay to reconsider his decision, and it was finally determined to attack protector and protected, and carry away the latter by force. The two then quitted the town together, and took refuge in a neighbouring camp. Backay was compelled to call the worst enemies of the city to his assistance, and it was to the Touaregs that Barth owed his escape from the fate of Laing and his safe return to Europe.

From the day of his arrival to the hour of his departure, the explorer lived in Timbuctoo like a prisoner. He was confined to one house with his own and his host's servants perpetually

on guard. He was unable to explore the town or even take an hour's walk in its streets, and all he saw of them were the few he passed through as, surrounded by an escort, he left the city to take refuge in the desert from the hostility of the populace. He only knew Timbuctoo through the eyes of his servants and other people of that class, and that is why this portion of his book is so deceptive and, in spite of its length, vague and empty. It consists of copious details of his anxieties, his hopes and fears for his life; and its few interesting passages are swamped in an ocean of tiresome details, according to the method of German scholars. Instead of showing us some new aspect of the Mysterious City, he rails at his servants like a peevish housewife and entertains us again and again with the health of his camels. Réné Caillié saw, questioned, and observed an astonishing amount during his fourteen days' stay in Timbuctoo, and gathered an incomparably richer harvest than did Barth in his sojourn of a month. On comparing the two accounts, one sees that Barth's utterances are mere amplifications of the facts acquired by his predecessor.

After this we are somewhat surprised to see Barth, from his height of Doctor, treating Réné Caillié as an 'altogether incapable man';[1] and surprise turns to stupefaction when he assumes that 'no one has been as well able as himself to represent the town and its inhabitants in their true aspect.'[2] It is another example of the old saying, that one may have great learning and little wit. Réné Caillié has given us far more than we could expect from a man who only knew how to read and write, a poor fellow who had not enough to eat most of his days, and was tormented by scurvy; while Barth on the contrary did not, in Timbuctoo at least, fulfil the promise of his great reputation.

[1] *Barth*, vol. iv. p. 38, French edition. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 442, German edition.

He had his excuses however; circumstances prevented his seeing more of the town than its roofs, and deprived him of any knowledge of its inhabitants. Public feeling was against him. El Backay was in revolt against the authorities of the town and its Foulbe king, and both he and his guest were avoided by the people. Barth lived in the society of a stranger sheik and his brothers, the chiefs of the Touaregs, Foulbes, Berabichs, and other people of the desert, who were equally strangers to the town. This explains how it was that he was unable to procure any of the literary works of the city, and remained ignorant of the real author of the Tarik in a town in which it was known to all. He had to be content with extracts, hastily copied from an example at Gando, from which he composed his historical chapter (the only new thing in his book); and he so completely confuses the history of the Songhoi with that of Timbuctoo that, in his hands, the amusing and picturesque Chronicle of the Sudan becomes something unutterably flat and tiresome. We surely had a right to expect something better from the accredited scholar who was so exacting towards one who had been educated in an elementary school.

. . . . . .

We have seen that El Backay's house to-day is a mere heap of ruins; this is not the case, however, with the one next door, which his hospitality offered to Barth. This dwelling remains exactly as it was described by the explorer, and it is to be hoped that it will be as carefully preserved as that of Réné Caillié. Timbuctoo has none too many relics of the Europeans, and, everything considered, there is no need to look harshly on the memory of Barth. His surly disposition and his infatuation must have caused him disagreeables enough in his lifetime, and

Europeans at Timbuctoo remember with gratitude that he was the first to follow the course of the eastern Niger to Say, and to clear up the vast geographical regions surrounding Lake Chad.

I also found traces of Barth in his character of ambassador. On his return to Europe he set before the English a scheme of

BARTH'S HOUSE

penetration in the direction of Timbuctoo which was based upon an exaggerated notion of the authority of El Backay. The shorter routes, those of Algeria and Senegal, being in the possession of France, he advocated reaching the city by way of the Niger, starting from its mouth. He laid great stress upon the value of El Backay's support to an English enterprise, a view which was the more readily accepted by the Government as the

progress France was making in Southern Algeria was causing them much anxiety.

The capture of Timbuctoo gave some curious documents into our hands. They have not been edited, and we give them in their entirety, for they display English plans and methods without any need of commentary.

LETTER I

Letter from Lord Clarendon to Sheik el Backay.

Praise be to God! May He be glorified!

On the part of Clarendon, Minister to the Queen and Government of England, to the greatly honoured and very noble Sheik, the learned among scholars who shines by his intelligence, Sidi Mohamed El Backay, ben Sidi Mohamed, ben Sidi Mokhar El Kounti; to whom we address our thanks and the expression of our consideration. May God reward him! So be it!

Salutation be with you.

May God accord you His mercy and blessing with the purest of His graces!

I would have you know that the Queen of England has heard the report of Doctor Barth (named Abdel Kerim among the Arabs), who visited you at her command, in your country, to renew the friendship existing between you and us, and to make you known to her. Barth has made known to us the goodwill with which you received him and which can never be forgotten. You have protected him from a faithless people who were unable to distinguish good from evil (may God reward you for the good actions His law recommended to you!). He has informed us of your strength and courage, and we have felt great joy thereat.

The letters you sent by him have arrived. We have read them and well understand what they contain. It has been a great pleasure to us. The hopes of the English Government have been understood by you. What we wish is to open the eyes of the Arabs of the

south to commerce and all appertaining to it, and we are now aware that you have looked upon our mission with pleasure and have accepted our friendship with joy.

We have given you our word that the friendship binding us shall not diminish through the centuries, and that all that the Arabs require of us we will do, without increase or diminishment. We will assist them in all that they are unable to perform, and as our government is very powerful we will protect your people who turn to us, above all with the aid of your Lordship, who have long shown your power and your friendship for us.

The Queen experienced great joy when she knew the benefits with which you loaded Abdel Kerim, who was enabled to return in peace owing to your reception and the honours with which you surrounded him, and she sends you presents of products manufactured in England.

These presents have been packed in cases and sent to the Consul-general of Tripoli, who will send them on to you. God grant that they may arrive safely and in good condition, and that they may please and rejoice you.

We request and recommend you to say to the chief of the Aoulemidens and the chief of the Tademekkats, that the Queen of England has received the letters sent by them to her through Abdel Kerim. We have all been pleased by them. She begs you to say to these chiefs that she salutes them and sends them a poignard and a sabre, the poignard for one, and the sabre for the other. You will easily recognise these objects, for the name of the recipient is written upon each.

To conclude this letter, we wish to say to you that our joy would be great to see one of your people, above all a child of your own house, whose visit would honour us. We wish to show him our power, our manufactures, and many other things.

May God prolong your life and preserve you to live.

Your friend,

CLARENDON,

Minister of the English Government.

LONDON, *the fifteenth day of April* 1859.

VIEW TAKEN FROM THE TERRACE OF BARTH'S HOUSE

LETTER II

LETTER FROM THE ENGLISH CONSUL AT TRIPOLI TO EL BACKAY.

Praise be to the one God! May God grant His blessing to him after whom there was no longer a Prophet (otherwise Mahomet)!

To our friend the noble Lord, the very high, very learned, very complete Sidi Ahmed Backay.

May our greeting reach him with the expression of our consideration.

You will find in this letter an epistle from the minister Clarendon, with a translation in Arabic. It is written in reply to the letter received by you.

When you have read this letter *you will know that the English Government has sent a steamer up the river that flows out of your country, and has recommended those on board to make every effort to reach you.* Watch for them. *We desire to unite ourselves in friendship with the people of your country, and make ourselves known to you, above all at Timbuctoo where you live.* We ask God to assist us in this task because *it will result in great good to your country and to us also.*

The son of your sister, Sidi Mohamed, and the people of his retinue are well. He is with me at this moment, awaiting the presents the Government is sending him, and the writings which seal the friendship existing between you and us.

Our Government has already given Sidi Mohamed the choice between several things. They would send a boat to take him to them, or they would reward him here and return him to you, or he could stay with me till the end of the winter and the beginning of the spring, when a boat could take him to England. Sidi Mohamed decides to return from here, and this is also preferred by my Government, for we fear the effect of the cold of our climate upon his health. This cold is very great, *etc.*

(*Signature illegible.*)

The boat mentioned never did reach Timbuctoo, nor did El Backay visit England and see its manufactures. Lord Clarendon's

'great joy' was of short duration, and his hopes resulted in nothing.

After the departure of Barth, his protector had no leisure to give to the plans which had been sketched between them; he was entirely occupied in taking care of himself. The generous attitude which had popularised him with Europe had greatly complicated his position in Timbuctoo. His very strained relations with the Foulbe authorities, and the suspicion with which the inhabitants regarded a *protégé* of the Touaregs obliged him to maintain a good deal of reserve.

The most critical period of the Sudan was now approaching, and the Toucouleur invasion was spreading from south to north. El Hadj Omar had marched from victory to victory, and was now menacing the Foulbe empire (1860). Ahmadou Ahmadou naïvely sought to avert the peril by opposing a man of religion to one who, to justify his massacres, posed as a reformer, and Sheik El Backay reappeared on the scenes. He was exhorted to intervene as mediator between the kingdom and the new Prophet, but, remembering the former harshness of the Foulbe monarch, he at first refused. Afterwards, however, he addressed a message of peace to El Hadj, which he accompanied with several presents. For all reply the conquering Toucouleur ironically invited the sheik to hasten with his homage, to which El Backay responded by a satire in verse on the false Prophet. Ahmadou Ahmadou had perished meanwhile, and the Toucouleurs were installed in his capital of Hamadallai. One of their columns, entering Timbuctoo under the command of Alpha Omar, pillaged the town and sacked the house of El Backay.

After a while the sheik decided to return from the desert, in which he had sought shelter, and at his instigation Touaregs and Kountas joined the fray. Alpha Omar's column was surprised

by night and totally destroyed, and the conquerors, reinforced by Foulbes, besieged El Hadj Omar in Hamadallai. The Toucouleur peril was averted, but dissension now spread among the troops, and El Backay quitted Timbuctoo to establish peace. Before reaching Hamadallai, however, he fell ill at a little village, on the right bank of the Niger, called Saradina, and died there eight days afterwards (1864).

Abbidin, who was his favourite son, according to Barth, attempted to assume his father's position at Timbuctoo, but in vain, for neither Touaregs nor inhabitants would have anything to do with him. He then attempted a political *rôle* in the countries of the Deltas, and finally relapsed into brigandage; pillaging and terrorising the shores of the Black and White Niger, under the pretext of fighting the Touaregs. He was killed by the latter as he was making a pilgrimage to his father's tomb in 1890.

Such was the history of the Backays up to the moment of our arrival in Timbuctoo. It is the story of the decline of a great and noble family of the desert. I will mention one more somewhat remarkable episode. Barth awoke at Berlin one morning under the impression that he must write to General Faidherbe, the governor of Senegal, and recommend the Backays to him in case one or other of them should require assistance. He sent the letter, and at the precise moment of its arrival in St. Louis, Oulad Backay had been arrested as a spy, and was on the point of being condemned to death by a court-martial. Faidherbe naturally acquitted the prisoner, and thus Barth's and England's debt was repaid.

Two of the sheik's sons, namely, Baba Ahmed and Bai, were still living when we entered Timbuctoo. They had returned to the Saharian Adrar, the cradle of their family, and settled at

Tached-Ait (the mountain of stone), a ten days' journey from Timbuctoo. All traces of the influence their forefathers exercised over the Touaregs had disappeared, and they were living on exceedingly bad terms with their neighbours, the Touaregs of Air.

Ahmed, grandson of the sheik, lives at Gourbo on the Niger, and seems to wish to restore the prestige of the family. He addressed a letter to the French authorities, asking if they were disposed to ratify the good relations established by Barth. He was answered in the affirmative, but his situation is so precarious that he will scarcely be of much use to us. A solitary Backay, Ahmadi-Alouata, occupies a modest position in Timbuctoo, and is on the best of terms with the authorities.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FRENCH CONQUEST

Up to the last moment England endeavoured to put her hand upon the commerce of Timbuctoo. Failing in her efforts from Tripoli and the Niger's mouth, she attempted to secure a footing by way of Morocco, and was installed towards 1890 at Cape Juby. It was then too late. Our columns and posts had been slowly advancing by the Senegal route advocated by Colbert, and in 1893 Colonel Archinard took Jenne, the last halting-place but one. The following year we were at Timbuctoo, and Cape Juby was evacuated.

Whatever may have been said at the time, the occupation of Timbuctoo was not only necessary, but had to be effected with the least possible delay. No one can complain now that we have not made known the history of these people and their country. The prosperity of the Sudan is so closely connected with that of its principal market, that if the general anarchy had been prolonged in Timbuctoo all the sacrifices of human life and money we had made on her threshold would have remained sterile. The sooner an end was put to the ruinous dominion of the Touaregs the better would it be. What would have become of the town if the French occupation had been prevented? We can easily picture the scene: the Touaregs would assemble and unite with Kountas, Foulbes, and Moors, as they did thirty years ago

against the Toucouleurs at the instigation of El Backay. The routes from Morocco, Tuat, and Tripoli would have left the Sudan (that enormous country which we occupy with such modest means) open to foreign intrigues, to the introduction of arms and ammunition, and to fanatics led by some inspired marabut, to a second El Hadj Omar returned from Mecca, or to some Mahdi come from Tuat. The result of long years of struggle and effort would be destroyed in a few months, our patient work of regeneration and pacification would be hopelessly compromised, and the flames of revolt which would break out in Timbuctoo would rapidly spread to Algeria. The seat of so many perils, the key to all the routes of the Sahara and Sudán, must be in our hands as soon as possible.

These dangers were dissipated by the promptitude of our march on Timbuctoo. All homage to Colonel Archinard, who knew so well the country and people with whom he had to deal. By his alacrity the colony was spared fresh convulsions and the capital great sacrifices. No sooner was Jenne taken, than, with remarkable intuition, he traced the plan of the succeeding campaign. A forced march was to be made on Timbuctoo to prevent any concentration of the nomads, one column traversing the countries on the left bank of the Niger, another advancing by means of the river as the gunboats cleared the passage. Such were the tactics pursued at the end of 1894. Colonel Bonnier conducted one of the columns, Colonel Jouffre the second, while Lieutenant Boiteux commanded the flotilla. Unfortunately Colonel Archinard was not there to conduct the campaign; had he been, the unfortunate episodes which marred its execution would probably have been averted.

I am now going to show the taking of Timbuctoo in a new light, as it appeared to the inhabitants. They related it to me

as the old Sudanese chroniclers, whose art is unhappily lost, might have done.

From the beginning of November 1894 vague rumours were afloat in Timbuctoo, reports of a mustering of troops at Segu. The country being quiet on their side, the inhabitants conjectured it to be some expedition preparing for the north. Three weeks passed without any news, and then suddenly events took shape. A merchant, who arrived from the south, announced that the gunboats had reached Sarafara and were preparing to start for Kabara. They had taken on board, as pilots, two of the leading merchants of Timbuctoo, who were in exile at Sarafara, having been ruined by the Touaregs. The next day news came of the arrival of the flotilla at Koriouma.

A body of Tenguaragif Touaregs were in Timbuctoo, and they summoned Hamdia, the chief of the town, and ordered him to have the tabala (war drum) sounded, and to command the people to take up arms. The excitement was great, the population being divided between fear of the French and terror of the Touaregs; some of the notables remonstrated with Hamdia, and the Kountas alone showed any courage. However, all those who had not hidden themselves in time had to set out in company with the veiled men. This small army, of which the Touaregs formed the cavalry, was armed with lances and javelins, and a few rifles belonging chiefly to the Kountas.

As this army was marching to Kabara on the morning of December 5th, the flotilla had left Koriouma, and was ascending the Pool to Dai. There Commandant Boiteux and some Laptots (black sailors) disembarked in a lighter to reconnoitre the route to Kabara, and gather sufficient information to acquaint the two columns with the situation when they should arrive. But an

incident occurred which upset their intended plans, and hastened the capture of Timbuctoo in an unforeseen manner.

The approach of the lighter having been signalled at Kabara, the Touaregs and Timbuctooans assembled on the banks, silent and immovable. When the lighter appeared in sight a cloud of lances and javelins greeted it, the Kountas discharged their guns, and a general uproar took place. Only one shot carried, wounding a laptot; the rest had time to escape the javelins by crouching at the bottom of the boat. They replied with a volley which wounded several, killed one, and put all to flight, the Touaregs to the desert, and the Timbuctooans back to their city.

A few hours later the gunboats and lighters anchored in the harbour of Kabara.

At Timbuctoo the authorities held council during the night. 'What is to be done'? asked Hamdia, the chief.

'Listen to my words and thought,' replied the kadi. 'You must write a letter to the commander, and say, "It is not we who are responsible for what has happened at Kabara but the Touaregs, whom we fear. We, the people of Timbuctoo, are not opposed to your arrival here, for you hold the countries from which we draw our commerce and alimentation. We place ourselves in your hands." This is my advice.'

'I am afraid to do that,' replied Hamdia. 'The Touaregs insulted me this morning by saying that we had written to the white men asking them to come. They know that some of our people are on their side.'

'The Touaregs do us nothing but harm: why listen to them?' replied the kadi. 'We had better send a letter to Kabara.'

'But the road is guarded. Our messengers would be taken and killed.'

'You can get to Kabara by other than the main route.'

'So be it,' said Hamdia finally. 'Let us do as you say.'

The kadi drew up the letter, and wrote to the commander as follows:—

'We would have you to know that what took place this morning was done without our sanction. We only took part under compulsion from the Touaregs, and we fled as soon as we could. Our united resolution was this. When, a month ago, we learnt of the arrival of your troops at Segu, some Arab merchants counselled us to write to our former master, the Sultan of Morocco, and ask him what we were to do if the white men came. The messengers set out for Fez with a caravan. The route is

GENERAL VIEW OF FORT BONNIER

long, and they have not yet returned. We are women. We do not fight.'

Two messengers, who were bribed with a hundred yards of white linen to go to Kabara, immediately set out. Before sunrise they returned. One of the Timbuctooans, who accompanied the gunboats, had read and translated the kadi's letter to the white man's interpreter, and then written the following answer in the commandant's name:—

'I know that all the mounted men and those armed with

lances were Touaregs, but those who had guns were natives of Timbuctoo. Why did you attack us before you knew what we wished? It is not thus you should receive people with whose intentions you are not acquainted. Ours were for your good. But what is past is past; to-morrow send some of your chiefs for a palaver.'

Early in the morning of the next day the Touaregs returned to Timbuctoo. They were questioned by one of the notables, Alpha Saidou, the chief of the Ghingaraber quarter.

'We pay you taxes, therefore you ought to defend us. Here are the white men. What do you intend doing?'

'Do as you like,' they replied. 'The Tenguaragifs are not the only masters here. Other tribes share the tax with us, and our people ought not to be the only ones to be slaughtered. Besides, we have just learned that a column is coming from the west, the Gundam quarter, where our flocks and wives are. We want to protect them, and we are going.'

The Touaregs having left the town, the chiefs and notables assembled in the mosque of Sidi Yaia after the sunset prayer. They decided to accede to the commandant's wish, and two delegates were chosen. The letter which accredited them repeated that they were merchants and not combatants, and that if the commandant would wait for the sultan's answer all would be well; but if not, he was at liberty to do just what he pleased; he would not be opposed by the people. However, the delegates came back; one, a Tripolitan chosen by the Arab merchants, would not do. The commandant, would not treat with a stranger, but only with the natives. He was replaced by an influential marabut, Mohaman Kouti, the other delegate being Alpha Saidou. From that time negotiations opened very amicably with Kabara, the delegates frankly explaining the situation and announcing the exodus of the Touaregs. The

commandant received them courteously, told them that two armies were following him up, and demanded that a treaty of peace should be signed by the chief and authorities of the town placing the country under the protectorate of France. But no one in Timbuctoo dared give his signature. The town was dismayed, every one feared the return of the Touaregs, knowing that in that case his signature would cost him his head.

According to a local legend, the Niger has an exceptionally high and early rise in those years when some remarkable event, generally sinister, is to take place, such as war, epidemic, or famine. For thirty years no one remembered to have seen so much water in the pool that winds from Kabara to Timbuctoo. M. Boiteux decided to hasten the negotiations, and arrived at Timbuctoo, by means of the pool of Kabara, with two lighters armed with revolving guns, borrowed from the gunboats.

And thus it was that Timbuctoo, a town nearly eight hundred miles from the sea—a town of the Sahara, moreover,—was taken by sailors, thus equalling the feat of Jourdan's Hussars, who took possession of the Dutch fleet among the ice of the Zuyder Zee.

It was December 15th. The evening before, the two delegates had been sent back to Timbuctoo to prepare it for the events which were to follow. During the night, the lighters, manned by eighteen men, had crossed the sands without hindrance, and were before Timbuctoo by the morning. On hearing this, some forty of the besieged, Foulbes and Kountas mostly, took up arms; but the authorities compelled them to put them down, threatening to stir up the mob against them if they did not. The chiefs then proceeded to the banks of the pool, taking with them gifts of welcome. 'Are you bringing me the treaty of peace I demanded?' asked Commandant Boiteux. 'No,' the chief replied, 'for we only

heard of your arrival last night.' 'Then I cannot accept your gifts,' said M. Boiteux, 'and I have nothing further to say to you. You know my wish; I made it known to your two envoys.'

As the deputation retired one of the guns was landed and planted on a neighbouring dune, which was rapidly transformed into a redoubt; the other was left on board the lighter, to cover any eventual retreat.

The presence of the little troop, and, above all, the two cannon (whose terrible power was known to them), reassured the authorities as to the return of the Touaregs, and gave them courage for a final resolution. They assembled their notables and marabuts at the mosque, and, the three o'clock prayer having been recited, Kouati, the most influential marabut, stood up and said, 'What have you all to say?'

'But what have you to say?' the assembly replied.

'I? Oh, I am not one of the authorities.'

'Certainly. But you are a marabut, you have the word of God. Speak! speak!'

'This is my thought,' Kouati then said. 'All those who will not make peace will be responsible in the Judgment Day for the souls of those who get killed.'

'We will do as you counsel us.'

'I am not the only marabut in Timbuctoo,' Kouati objected. 'Question my brethren.'

'What Mohaman Kouati says is true,' opined the brethren.

'It is well,' concluded Kouati. 'I am going to make peace with the French.'

And then he went to the lighters with Alpha Saidou, who had accompanied him to Kabara, and said to the commandant, 'We ask for peace. We will accept it, and do all you wish. Henceforth we are with you.'

'Your decision gives me much pleasure,' M. Boiteux assured them. 'We do not like making war, we prefer peace. It was the Toucouleurs who first fired at Jenne; had it not been for that, we should not have fired a shot. In future, you have nothing to fear. Sign the treaty by which you recognise the French as masters of the town, and I, on my side, will sign one which will place you under our protection.'

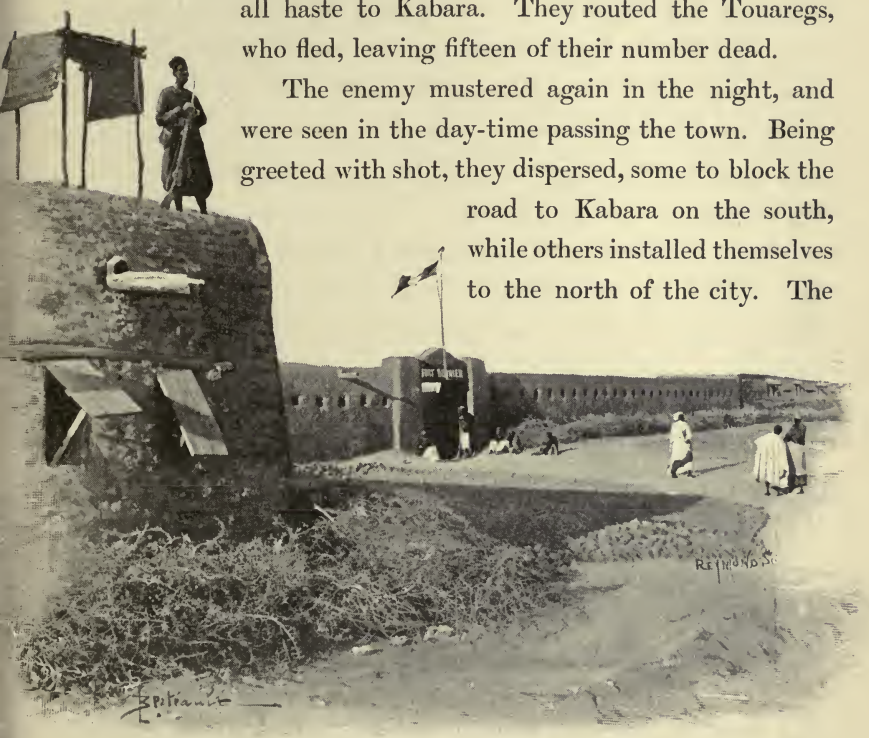
The next morning, the two treaties having been exchanged in the presence of the chiefs and marabuts, they implored the commandant to enter and occupy the town, explaining their fear of reprisals from the Touaregs, and assuring him that henceforth he could in all things count upon them. They loyally informed him that the besieged had taken up arms, and they undertook to keep them under surveillance, and to acquaint him with all that went on inside and outside the city.

M. Boiteux requested them to show him the highest point of the city, and there he selected a large house. One of the guns was hoisted on to the terrace, and the surrounding walls were temporarily put into a state of defence. This improvised fortlet was at the north of the town, where a real fort, occupied by a squadron of Spahis, now stands. At the south of the town another house was transformed in the same manner, and the second gun was placed there, while the handful of Europeans and Laptots were stationed in between, and some fifty men, armed with guns furnished by the town, were posted as sentinels.

In the meantime the Touaregs had plotted with, and been joined by, some Kountas. On December 21st they attacked the flotilla reserve station at Kabara. It was on this occasion the sad episode occurred which cost Midshipman Aube his life. At the moment he was dying at Our' Oumaira, the sentinels at Timbuctoo, having heard rifle-shots, had given the alarm. The

only two horses in the town were brought out, Commandant Boiteux mounted one, another European the other, and, accompanied by the little garrison and the fifty natives, they set off in all haste to Kabara. They routed the Touaregs, who fled, leaving fifteen of their number dead.

The enemy mustered again in the night, and were seen in the day-time passing the town. Being greeted with shot, they dispersed, some to block the road to Kabara on the south, while others installed themselves to the north of the city. The



ENTRANCE TO FORT BONNIER

next night they sent a letter to the kadi couched in the following terms: 'People of Timbuctoo, are you for us, or for the white men?' The messenger was sent back with no other answer than having seen the letter torn in pieces and spat upon. At the same time, an inhabitant of the city arrived who had been made prisoner by the Touaregs, and had escaped under cover of the darkness. He told the Timbuctooans that at a council of the Touaregs, N'-Gouna, chief of the Tenguaragifs, had proposed

marching on Timbuctoo, but had been opposed by the chiefs of the Kalintassars.

The commandant was immediately warned, and the alarm given to the inhabitants, who feared an attack in the dark, according to the usual custom of the veiled men. Every one was armed; even the strangers of Mossi, who had been recently exploited by the Touaregs, seized their bows and arrows. They were posted east and west, while the two fortlets guarded north and south.

As day broke they could see bands passing from east to west, but not daring to approach when they saw the muster. The divisions among the Touaregs increased; the Kalintassars, who had not wished to attack Timbuctoo, returned to their homes, and only the Tenguaragifs remained, and they seized the road to Kabara with the intention of starving the town.

They calculated well. About January 6th the garrison found the provisions were running short. Whatever happened, they must revictual from Kabara. The commandant resolved to use the path by which he had come; so, in the night, the two lighters, armed afresh with the revolving guns and a few men, glided out unperceived. However, they could not get back before daylight, and the Touaregs, having discovered them, assembled in a mass on the shores where the banks of the pool narrowed. As they were preparing to fling their javelins, the guns were unmasked, and a charge of grape-shot saluted them. The Touaregs had not noticed the departure of the lighters, and thinking that reinforcements had arrived, they fled to the interior westward of the town, and the road to Timbuctoo was free.

Four days later, January 10th, the first column, under command of Colonel Bonnier, entered the town, and thus ended the extraordinary adventure of the marines in Timbuctoo.

I have transcribed, word for word, the naïve account given me by those ebony and bronze men who were either the chief actors or chief spectators in this action. My one care has been to simplify their narrative and avoid any embellishments, yet I doubt if, in modern times, there has been any event as improbable. The gravity of heroic drama is mingled with the fun of an operetta, buffoonery wrestles with the sublime. Not even the unhealthy imagination of Edgar Poe ever conceived anything more fantastic.

It is so preposterous on the face of it. Nineteen men, seven of whom are Europeans and the remainder Senegalese negroes, set out to bring to terms a town of 8000 inhabitants, and are asked to take possession of it. And this town is no African Lauderneau: it is Timbuctoo the Great, known as a mysterious, fanatical,

FORT PHILIPPE

inaccessible city. Events follow *in crescendo*. The population sides with its masters of to-day against those of yesterday. One day they are 'women,' the next they are heroes ready to die in defence of their conquerors, and, what is more, they prove it! These Touaregs, whom formerly they had not dared to look in the face, they now fight in the open country. And, more astonishing still, they beat them! This dishevelled epopee, this mingling of

cavalry and artillery with naval combats and pictures of siege, does not last for one or several days, it is prolonged for a month. In fact, one is surprised not to see the green-eyed Pallas Athene, or the white-armed Venus, appearing in the plain of Timbuctoo to protect the combatants and inflame them with warlike ardour, while Apollo of the silver bow brings the others to confusion with his arrows. But no, this is no fable; it has all been lived in our notoriously prosaic nineteenth century. Why should such a glorious and amusing quip be followed by so sinister an epilogue?

The actors are the first column and those same Touaregs whom just now we left to the west of Timbuctoo. The story has been written by M. Raille, one of the garrison officers in Timbuctoo, who collected the facts from the survivors.

The morning after their entry into Timbuctoo, Colonel Bonnier, without further delay, ordered the fifth company and a platoon of the eleventh to set out and reconnoitre, that they might rid the neighbourhood of the nomads infesting it, and avenge, if possible, the massacre of Midshipman Aube.

At five o'clock in the morning, leaving the rest of the troops under the command of Captain Philippe, the colonel started with the little column. He was accompanied by Commander Hugueny, Captains Regad, Livrelli, Tassard, Sensaric, and Nigote, Lieutenants Garnier and Bouverst, Sub-lieutenant Sarda, Doctor Colonel Gallas, the veterinary Lenoir, and interpreter Acklouck.

It was the 14th of January 1894. At two o'clock in the afternoon Colonel Bonnier learnt that the Touaregs were distant only a mile or two in front of the column. They continued marching until eight in the evening, and then they saw some flocks and a few armed men. After giving chase to the stragglers, they encamped at a place called Taconbao, which had just been

evacuated by the Touaregs. Every one was satisfied and cheerful.

They encamped, as nearly as possible, in the form of a square, the men of the fifth company occupying the north, and those of the eleventh company the south side. Every one slept rolled up in his blanket with his arms piled near. On the other two sides the captured flocks were picketed. The prisoners were installed in the middle of the camp, while the staff formed a group in the middle of the square towards the east side, where the colonel's quarters were.

Until midnight the officers of the staff were awake, and laughing and joking, having spent the evening gaily. At last every one slept. It was a magnificent night, and the brilliant light of the moon illuminated everything, until she set towards four o'clock in the morning. At half-past four only the sentinels, of whom there were six, were awake. The colonel himself gave the orders to have them placed at a short distance from the camp. Suddenly, in the midst of the silence and darkness, two reports of firearms resounded through the camp, and the cry 'To arms!' was repeated everywhere. Immediately every one was up, hurriedly seeking his arms. Alas! it was too late!

The Touaregs, some of whom had been seen straggling round the camp the evening before, had assembled during the night. Their cavalry, accompanied by running footmen and favoured by the darkness, flung themselves on to the French camp in a furious and irresistible charge. In the twinkling of an eye they had capsized the piled weapons and swarmed into the camp before any one had had time to defend himself.

It was night indeed, and the frightful scene which ensued cannot be depicted. It was a furious onslaught, an indescribable tumult. Above everything sounded the warcries of the enemy, who were

striking and killing on all sides with lances, assegais, sabres, poignards, tomahawks, etc. A few rifle-shots mingled with the clamour of distress, and that was all.

Our tirailleurs succumbed to this human avalanche. In a few minutes it was all over.

Three Europeans, an officer and two non-commissioned officers (Captain Nigote, Sergeant-Major Baretti, and Sergeant Lalire) and a handful of men succeeded in forcing a passage and reaching some bushes near the encampment. Captain Nigote collected the fugitives in the midst of these unprecedented perils and difficulties, and conducted them to the convoy which had been left behind. There they were able to reform.

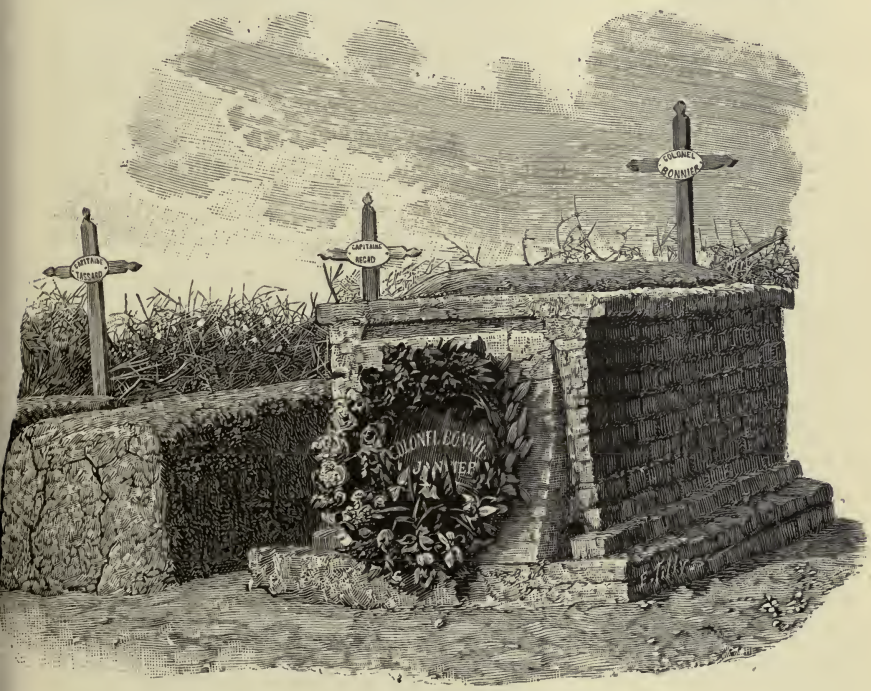
Eighty-two of our men and two guides were missing. Nine officers, including the colonel, three non-commissioned officers (of whom two were Europeans), eight corporals, and sixty native tirailleurs, had fallen before the enemy.

As far as the survivors could judge in the darkness and tumult, they had been attacked by about two hundred horsemen and between two and three hundred foot-soldiers.

Twenty-five days afterwards, the second column, commanded by Colonel Jouffre, arrived at Taconbao and collected the skeletons of the thirteen Europeans, bringing them back to Timbuctoo. They were buried behind an enclosure of dead thorns at the foot of the fort which was being built to the south of the town. The last solemn honours were rendered them before the whole garrison and the assembled population, and modest mounds of sun-dried bricks and simple black crosses were placed over the graves of these unfortunate heroes. Then Colonel Jouffre turned his thoughts to vengeance. He soon ascertained that the Tenguaragifs had settled between the Lakes Faguibine and Fati, not far

from Gundam. They were surprised by night in their encampments, and our tirailleurs and Spahis slew a great number of them. According to a saying of their own country, they paid the ransom of blood.

Since we have avenged our dead, as the customs of the desert



COLONEL BONNIER'S TOMB AT TIMBUCTOO

require, and since we possess the country and the markets from which the Touaregs draw their supplies, their different tribes have offered their submission. I will not affirm that this submission is complete and definite. It will still be necessary from time to time to show them that their nefarious dominion is at an end, and that they have found their master.

Timbuctoo remained unwaveringly faithful through all these

vicissitudes, true to the word given on the first day, 'We are for you henceforth,' and it is easy to see that this allegiance will never be withdrawn.

After waiting for it a year, the town received the sultan's reply. The sovereign of Fez wrote as follows:—

'Praise be unto the one God.

'May blessings and salutations be upon our Lord Mahomet, upon his family, and upon his companions.

'Greeting to the chief of the town and the notables. May God accord you His favours, accompanied by His blessings and His mercy.

'I have paid great attention to the help and protection you ask of me. I am greatly distressed. I should have responded to your appeal and given you good support, but the great distance between us compels me to be cautious. Your neighbours must come to your assistance.

'I will march upon the French and drive them away from you, but you must first send me proofs of your dependency on my high government and my kingdom. If you possess writings emanating from your ancestors (those generous ones who are already in the Land of the Blessed), manifest and serious documents, send them to me. With their help I will deliver you from everything by the power and grace of the Most High God, who suffices unto the afflicted and who comforts those who suffer, for He is All-powerful.

'Salutation.

'Moulay El Hassan.'

And so faded their last and fondest illusions. As soon as received, his majesty's letter was put into the hands of the commandant of Timbuctoo, who delicately placed it in the archives.

Two large forts have replaced the improvised fortifications, and their guns command every side of the town. Under their protection the inhabitants are reviving. The long nightmare

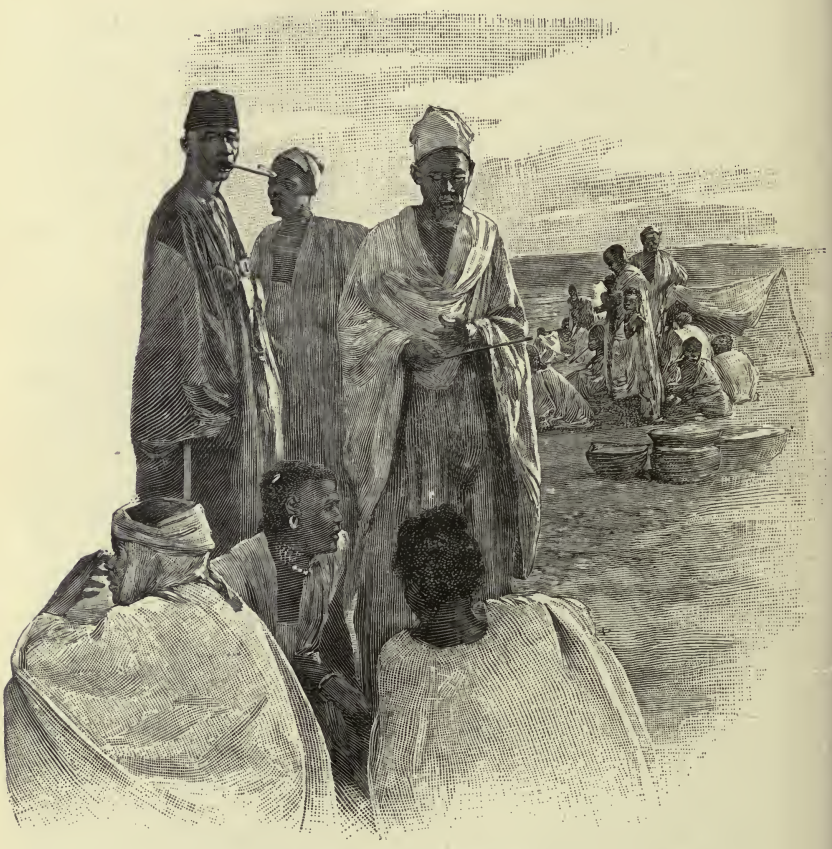
of the Touaregs is being slowly dispelled, they are beginning to repair and rebuild their houses, to leave the doors ajar, and to resume their beautifully embroidered robes.

The town begins to show signs of European occupation. A great, herculean negro plays the part of policeman, and promenades the streets with a sabre at his side. An enterprising merchant, Gaston Mery, has recently established a counting-house, and he carries on an excellent business in the large and comfortable house he has built there. Cardinal Lavigerie's White

A HOUSE : TYPICAL OF TIMBUCTOO RESTORED

Fathers have arrived, led by Father Hacquard (a man well known in Algeria), and, thanks to them, the town is already endowed with a church (Our Lady of Timbuctoo) and a school.

Such are the first days of the new era upon which Timbuctoo has entered, and from which she will emerge more famous than



THE POLICEMAN AT TIMBUCTOO

ever; for she possesses one thing which can never be destroyed, and which ensures her perpetual greatness — her unique geographical position on the threshold of the Sudan between the eastern and western Niger, two arms which embrace the whole of western Africa.

I see Timbuctoo throwing aside her rags in the distant future, and raising the form bent by misfortunes. The sandy pool of Kabara will have been cleared and deepened, and the Niger will have brought its abundant waters to the gates of the town. It will be an easy task then to carry an arm to north and east, and the town will be embraced by a girdle of cultivation. Her gardens, her wealth of verdure, and her palm-trees will be restored to her, and, threaded by shady walks, she will become a pleasant and active cosmopolitan city, a point of union between the black and white worlds.

The Sahara will be conquered; an iron chain will be put about its sands, the links of which will be railways; freights will circulate between Algiers and Timbuctoo with the speed of lightning; and the fleets of the Mediterranean will unite with those of the Niger. Touaregs, Kountas, and all unproductive nomads will be thrown back upon the desert, their first home, where they will form an efficient police force, which will protect the routes of the Sahara.

I picture the city become a centre of European civilisation and science, as it was formerly of Mussulman culture. The reputation of her scholars will again spread from Lake Chad to the mountains of Kong and the shores of the Atlantic, and Timbuctoo will once more be the wealthy and cultured Queen of the Sudan which her distant view now so deceitfully promises her to be.

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